

ISCER Marketing Mix: The New Holy Grail of Marketing Strategies

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Abstract

This paper proposes a modern, customer-centric and generic marketing mix to address the limitations of the numerous marketing mixes proposed over the past (almost) six decades – **The I.S.C.E.R. (or ISCER and pronounced IS-SIR) Marketing Mix**. **ISCER** represents **Information, Solutions, Costs, Experiences and Relationships**. The ISCER model asserts that to satisfy consumers' wants/needs and gain a competitive advantage, the marketing executive should utilize relevant and reliable **Information**, to provide/create effective and efficient **Solutions** for consumers, at **Costs** the consumers are willing to incur, while creating exceptional **Experiences** and developing meaningful long-term **Relationships** with all stakeholders.

Keywords: ISCER marketing mix, 4Ps Marketing Mix, marketing mix, marketing strategy, marketing, modern marketing mix, generic marketing mix.

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1. Introduction

The concept of Marketing has significantly evolved over the years. The American Marketing Association (AMA) states that its definition of Marketing is reviewed and reapproved/modified every three years. This is testament to the dynamic environment in which live and operate in. The AMA's most recent definition states that:

“Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Approved 2017).”

To achieve these goals, marketing executives are required to develop marketing strategies¹ using various tools. The marketing strategies may be digital or traditional strategies or a combination of both (see Perch, 2021, p. 37 for a comparison of digital and traditional marketing). Sathya (2017) describes digital marketing (or online marketing) as the use of digital technologies to market products and services. These technologies include the Internet, mobile phones, display advertising and other digital mediums (Sathya, 2017). In contrast, traditional marketing refers to any type of marketing that is not digital (Todor, 2016). Some examples are cold calling, direct paper mail, radio, television advertisements and sales flyers (Todor, 2016).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-store shopping was restricted, and in some cases prohibited, so many brick-and-mortar companies worldwide were forced to implement digital marketing strategies to reach their target audiences and *vice versa*. Companies utilized various online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The more customer-centric companies introduced online payment and delivery services to satisfy the needs of their customers who were unable to or uncomfortable leaving their residences. In Barbados, some companies used cash on delivery (COD) services² as an alternative to online payment services. COD services were also used for customers who did not have access to online payment services, were unfamiliar with online payments or skeptical about the security of online payment platforms.

This transition from traditional to digital marketing required the development and implementation of new tools and skills to aid marketing executives in the creation of successful marketing strategies. A very important set of these tools can be found in what is popularly referred to as the “Marketing Mix”.

Similarly, to marketing, the “definition and structure” of the Marketing Mix has also changed overtime. The latest proposed definition observed was from Jackson and Ahuja (2016). They defined the Marketing Mix as “*the marketing manager's set of key tools that can be adjusted, improved or changed in order to match the needs of the marketplace, to gain competitive advantage and to optimize the organization's stakeholder value*”. The Marketing Mix therefore consists of the building blocks of a marketing strategy (Blawatt, 2005).

Notwithstanding the numerous marketing mixes proposed over the years, it appears that all of them have at least one (1) of the following limitations:

1. The model is not applicable to the dynamic marketing environment which exists today (*i.e.*, digital marketing, importance of the customer experience, developing meaningful long-term relationships *etc.*);
2. It is not customer-centric;
3. It is not generic because it was designed for a specific marketing purpose (*e.g.*, product marketing)³;
4. It includes variables which are not under the control of the marketing executive;
5. It includes numerous variables which makes it difficult to remember; or
6. It includes variable names that marketing executives are not familiar with.

This paper therefore proposes an alternative marketing mix which addresses these limitations.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 focuses on the origin and development of the marketing mix. Section 3 proposes the ISCER Marketing Mix. Section 4 contains the conclusion.

2. Origin and Development of the Marketing Mix

2.1 Origin

The term “Marketing Mix” was coined by Borden in 1964. The idea however originated from Culliton (1948) who argued that a business executive should be a “mixer of ingredients”. Borden (1964) later suggested that this mix should include important “ingredients” such as: product planning, branding, pricing, distribution channels, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling and fact-finding and analysis.

2.1.1 The Popular Four Ps Marketing Mix

Borden’s (1964) proposed mix was soon after regrouped, refined and popularized by McCarthy (1964). McCarthy’s (1964) mix consisted of four (4) elements – Product, Price, Place and Promotion which are commonly referred to as the “Four Ps”. Product relates to the features, functions and benefits of the product. Price focuses on the price of the product. Place addresses how the product is distributed to the target market. Promotion handles the delivery of messages about the product to the target market.

The Four Ps model became the standard and was accepted and used globally (Jackman and Ahuja, 2016). It became synonymous with the Marketing Mix as some authors of introductory textbooks used the Four Ps model to define the Marketing Mix (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) highlighted Pride and Ferrell, 1989, p. 19 and Stanton et al., 1991, p. 13 as examples, however it should be noted that this practise was still occurring more than a decade after (*e.g.*, Blawatt, 2005, p. 13). More interesting is the fact that on even date, the Four Ps model dominates Internet search engine results when “Marketing Mix” is searched.

Notwithstanding its popularity, the Four Ps model has faced tremendous criticism over the years resulting in many authors proposing alternative models (see Tables 1-6).

Table 1. Review of Consumer Marketing Theory Literature

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Ohmae (1982)	No strategic elements are to be found in the marketing mix. The marketing strategy is defined by three factors.	Three Cs define and shape the marketing strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers • Competitors • Corporation
Kotler (1984)	External and uncontrollable environmental factors are very important elements of the marketing strategy programs.	The Marketing Mix should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers; • Environmental variables; and • Competitive variables Two additional Ps to the 4 traditional ones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political power • Public opinion formulation
Robins (1991)	The 4Ps Marketing Mix is too much internally oriented.	Four Cs expressing the external orientation of a Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers • Competitors • Capabilities • Company
Vignalli and Davies (1994)	Marketing planning will contribute to the organizational success if it is closely related to strategy. The Marketing Mix is limited to internal and non-strategic issues.	The MIXMAP technique allows the exact mapping of marketing mix elements and variables, allowing the consistency between strategy and tactics.
Doyle (1994)	While the 4Ps dominate the marketing management activities, most marketing practitioners would add two more elements in this mix in order to position their products and achieve the marketing objectives.	Two more factors must be added to the 4Ps mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services • Staff

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Bennett (1997)	Focused on internal variables therefore incomplete basis for marketing. Customers are disposed to buy products from the opposite direction to that suggested by the Marketing Mix.	Five Vs are the criteria of customer disposition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value • Viability • Variety • Volume • Virtue
Yudelson (1999)	The 4Ps are not the proper basis of the 21 st century marketing. The marketing developments of the last 40 years require a new flexible platform while the simplicity of the old model remains an attractive facto.	4 new Ps based on exchange activities: Product → Performance Price → Penalty Promotion → Perceptions Place → Process
Schultz (2001)	Marketplaces today are customer oriented. The 4Ps have less relevance today, they made sense the time they were invented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-consumer controls the market • Network systems should define the orientation of a new marketing • A new Marketing mix must be based on the Marketing Triad –Marketer, Employee and Customer

Adapted from Constantinides (2006)

Table 2. Review of Relationship Marketing Literature

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Lauterborn (1990)	The 4Ps Marketing Mix is product oriented. The successful marketing plan must place the customer in the centre of the marketing planning.	Four Cs replace the 4Ps, indicating the customer orientation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer needs • Convenience • Cost (customer's) • Communication
Rozenberg and Czepiel (1992)	Keeping existing customers is as important as acquiring new ones. The approach towards existing customers must be active, based on a separate marketing mix for customer retention.	Retention Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product extras • Reinforcing promotions • Sales-force connections • Specialized distribution • Post-purchase communication
Grönroos (1994)	Several arguments underlying the limitations of the marketing mix as the marketing paradigm: Obsolete, not integrative, based on conditions not common to all markets, production oriented, not interactive <i>etc.</i>	Relationship marketing offers all the necessary ingredients to become the new Marketing Paradigm, while the Marketing Mix is not suitable to support a relation-based approach.
Gummesson (1994, 1997)	... “The role of the 4Ps is changing from being founding parameters of marketing to one of being contributing parameters to relationships, network and interaction” ...	30 R(relationship) parameters illustrate the role of marketing as a mix of relationships, networks and interaction.
Goldsmith (1999)	The trend towards personalization has resulted in an increasing contribution of services to the marketing of products. Personalization must become the basis of the marketing management trajectory.	The personalized marketing plan includes 4 more P's next to the traditional Ps of the Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalization • Personnel • Physical Assets • Procedures • Procedures

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Patterson and Ward (2000)	The traditional Marketing Mix therefore has a clearly offensive character because the strategies associated to the 4Ps tend to be function-oriented and output oriented. Well-managed organizations must shift the emphasis in managing valued customer relationships in order to retain and increase their customer base.	Four information-intensive strategies form the “new Cs” of Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Customization • Collaboration • Clairvoyance
Healy et al. (2001)	The weight of marketing management is clearly switching towards relationship marketing as the future marketing paradigm.	The relationship marketing addresses the elements of marketing management identified by the Marketing Relationship trilogy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Neo-Relationship Marketing • Networks

Adapted from Constantinides (2006)

Table 3. Review of Services Marketing Literature

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Booms and Bitner (1981)	Recognizing the special character of the services as products, they demonstrated the importance of environmental factors (Physical Evidence) influencing the quality perception. They included the Participants (personnel and customers) and the Process of service delivery as the additional Marketing Mix factors.	The Services Marketing Mix includes next to the 4Ps three more P's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants • Physical Evidence • Process
Cowell (1984)	Some aspects justifying the revision of the original Marketing Mix framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the original mix was developed for manufacturing companies • empirical evidence suggesting that marketing practitioners in the service sector find the marketing mix not being inclusive enough for their needs. 	Adopts the framework proposed by Booms and Bitner (1981)
Brunner (1989)	The 4P Marketing mix elements must be extended to include more factors affecting the services marketing thus becoming mixes themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept Mix • Cost Mix • Channels Mix • Communication Mix
Rushton and Carson (1989)	The unique characteristics of the services - intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability - make the control of the marketing process, using the generalized tools of marketing, inadequate.	New instruments and concepts must be developed to explain and manage the services intangibility.
Fryar (1991)	Segmentation and differentiation are the basis of successful positioning of services. Furthermore, the personal relationship with the customer and the quality of the service are important elements of the Services Marketing.	The marketing of services requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation based on segmentation and positioning • Customer contact • Unique vision on quality
Heuvel (1993)	Interaction between the one delivering the service and the customer is very important and has direct effect on the service quality and quality perception. The Product element can be better demonstrated as having two components, the primary and secondary service elements as well as the process.	The Services Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel • Product • Place • Price • Promotion

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Doyle (1994)	While recognizing that the content of the 4Ps in the service sector is somehow different from that of the tangibles he does accept the 4Ps as the elements of the services marketing mix. He identifies special difficulties in Promotion and Place preferring to replace them by the terms Communication and Distribution.	Service Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product • Price • Communication • Distribution
Melewar and Saunders (2000)	The Corporate Visual Identity System (CVIS) is the basis of the corporate differentiation and the core of the company's visual identity.	A new P must be added to the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix (and the 3Ps of the Services Mix) namely the – Publications.
English (2000)	The traditional marketing mix has never been an effective tool for health services marketing.	A new framework emerges, emphasizing the 4 Rs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance • Response • Relationships • Results
Grove et al. (2000)	Services marketing can be compared to a theatrical production. How the service is performed is as important as what is performed. Critical factor is therefore the customer experience. The traditional Marketing Mix does not adequately capture the special circumstances that are present when marketing a service product.	Four strategic theatrical elements constitute the services experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actors • Audience • Setting • Performance These elements must be added to the extended Services Marketing Mix model of Booms and Bitner (1981)
Beckwith (2001)	Marketing services in a changing world requires focusing on increasing the customer satisfaction and rejecting old product paradigms and marketing fallacies.	The four keys of Modern (services) Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price • Brand • Packaging • Relationships

Adapted from Constantinides (2006)

Table 4. Review of Retail Marketing Literature

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Ster van der (1993)	The retail format is the focus of retail marketing, the basis of merchant differentiation and the element that attracts potential customers in the retail outlet. The Marketing Mix for retailers is divided into two groups of factors – the logistical and commercial ones.	The Retailing Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics Concept: place mix, physical distribution mix, and personnel mix • Commercial Concept: product mix, presentation mix, price mix, and promotion mix
Boekema et al. (1995)	The consumer choice for a retail outlet depends on the “Shop Picture” the customer develops. The retailers can use the marketing mix instruments in order to give form to their retail format (retail formula) which addresses the consumer's expectations and influences his/her choice.	The Retailing Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place • Assortment • Shop Presentation • Price Policy • Personnel • Promotion
Rousey and Morganosky (1996)	Empirical evidence suggests that the retail formats rather than the individual elements of the Marketing Mix are the building blocks of customer value.	Retailing marketers should replace the 4Ps with the Lauterborn's 4 C's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer needs • Convenience • Cost (customer's) • Communication

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Mulhern (1997)	Modern retailing is increasingly based on a shift from traditional merchandising that usually places attention to marketing mix elements, towards active customer management by means of an integrated approach to retailing. More emphasis to customer relationships, rewarding regular customers and close cooperation with manufacturers.	Elements of the integrated retailing strategy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store location • Store positioning • Store image • Physical environment • Retail service
Wang et al. (2000)	While the 4Ps form the basis of the traditional marketing, the task of marketers in relationship marketing is different: The main tasks are identifying, establishing, maintaining and enhancing relationships (Grönroos 1996).	The basic components of Web retail are the three basic components of relationship marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database • Interaction • Network
Kotler (2003)	The customer sophistication has forced retailers to review their strategies. Factors like procurement and service have become basic elements of the retailer's marketing mix.	Retailer's marketing decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Market • Product assortment and Procurement • Services and Store Atmosphere • Price Decision • Promotion decision • Place Decision

Adapted from Constantinides (2006)

Table 5. Review of Industrial Marketing Literature

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Turnbull et al. (1996)	More than 20 years of research by the International Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP) indicate that success in Business-to Business (B2B) Marketing is based on the degree and the quality of the interdependence between firms.	Competitive advantage of firms engaged in B2B marketing will depend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with customers • Interaction strategies • Organization evolution • Improvements in customer portfolios • Inter-organizational - personal contacts • Network mobilization
Davis and Brush (1997)	The 4Ps Marketing Mix is not suitable as the conceptual basis for the marketing of the high-tech industry. This is because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the 4Ps are based on marketing of consumer products; and • international elements are not taken into consideration. 	13 strategic elements form the marketing platform of the high-tech industry
Parasuraman (1998)	The key to value creation is assisting the customer to achieve his own corporate objectives.	The basis of industrial marketing is the personalized approach with special emphasis on: customer service, teamwork, service quality, and excellence.
Andersen and Narus (1999)	The role of business marketing in a value-based environment is the efficient management of relationships and networks.	Value-based positioning orients and updates each of the four Ps

Adapted from Constantinides (2006)

Table 6. Review of E-Commerce Marketing Literature

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Peattie and Peters (1997)	The new communication and interaction capabilities will change everything around marketing in many industries, yet the basic marketing concept will remain unchanged. New role for the 4P's of the Marketing Mix.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product: co-design and production • Price: more transparency • Place: direct contacts with customers • Promotion: more control of the customer, interaction
Aldridge et al. (1997)	There are several and important differences between the physical marketing and the online marketing. Many new factors define the limitations of the traditional marketing management.	While the 4P's can remain the backbone activities of e-commerce they acquire a new and different role in the online marketplace.
Mosley-Matchett (1997)	A successful presence on the Internet is based on a website designed on the basis of a marketing mix of 5 W's.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who: Target audience / market • What: Content • When: Timing and updating • Where: Findability • Why: Unique Selling Proposition
O'Connor and Galvin (1997)	While concluding that the marketing is finding itself in a mid-life crisis, they suggest that the 4P's can remain the backbone of online marketing. They argue that technology can be implemented in order to improve and optimize the online, 4P-based marketing activities.	New technology-based functionality maintains the 4P's as the basic planning tool for online marketing.
Evans and King (1999)	There are four steps in building a successful B2B website. Each of these steps brings with it a number of major managerial implications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Planning: defining mission and goals • Web Access: how to get Web entry • Site Design and Implementation: content • Site Promotion Management and Evaluation: commercial and managerial aspects
Chaffey et al. (2000)	Argues that the Internet can provide opportunities to vary the elements of the traditional marketing mix, while he identifies six key elements for effective website design: Capture, Content, Community, Commerce, Customer Orientation and Credibility.	The Internet marketing planning is based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Audience • Integration • Marketing Support • Brand migration • Strategic Partnerships • Organizational Structure • Budget
Lawrence et al. (2000)	A hybrid approach suggesting that creating an online marketing activity should be based on the traditional Ps of the marketing mix (indeed with two add-ons; people and packaging) as well as the new Five Ps of Marketing.	The New Five Ps of Marketing are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paradox • Perspective • Paradigm • Persuasion • Passion
Kambil and Nunes (2000)	Looking to the marketing of music products e-commerce marketing requires new approaches from marketers, they have to move away from the traditional approach based on the 4P Marketing Mix	Important elements of the online marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community building • Original event programming • Convenience • Connectivity

Author	Arguments	Proposition
Bhatt and Emdad (2001)	The virtual value chain is changing the nature of the 4P's and transforms them by adding new dimensions. Businesses still make their strategic marketing decisions based on the 4Ps Marketing Mix.	New Character of the 4P's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product: new options for customized information • Place: no time and location restrictions, direct delivery • Price: price discrimination and customization, price transparency • Promotion: action-oriented promotional activities are possible, promotional flexibility
Schultz (2001)	Marketplaces today are customer oriented. The 4P's have less relevance today; they made sense the time they were invented. Succeeding in the 21 st century interactive marketplace means that marketing has to move from an internal orientation illustrated by the 4Ps to a view of the network or system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-consumer controls the market • Network systems should define the orientation of a new marketing • A new marketing mix must be based on the Marketing Triad – marketer, employee and customer.
Allen and Fjermestad (2001)	Accept that the traditional 4Ps marketing Mix can be the basis of the e-commerce strategy and identify the changes that are needed to make the model suitable for e-marketing.	4P's major changes in an e-commerce situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product: information, innovation • Place: reach • Price: increased competition • Promotion: more information, direct links
Constantinides (2002)	Some major flaws of the 4Ps mix as a basis of online marketing activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of interactivity; • lack of strategic elements in a constantly developing environment; and • the 4Ps are not the critical elements of online marketing 	The 4S model offers a comprehensive, integral approach on managing the online presence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope: strategic issues • Site: operational issues • Synergy: organizational issues • System: technological issues

Adapted from Constantinides (2006)

The most recent approach observed was from Akbar et al. (2022). They argued that the Four Ps model and Lauterborn's (1990) Four Cs model were not adequate for social marketing⁴ (e.g., behavioral change campaigns). Akbar et al. (2022) therefore proposed a Seven Cs marketing mix with the addition of Citizens, Customer Journey and Commitment to Lauterborn's (1990) Four Cs model. To specifically account for social marketing, they argued that Change, Competition and Consequences can also be added.

3. The I.S.C.E.R. (or ISCER pronounced IS-SIR) Marketing Mix

ISCER represents **Information, Solutions, Costs, Experiences** and **Relationships** (see Figure 1). The ISCER Marketing Mix asserts that to satisfy consumers' wants/needs and gain a competitive advantage, the marketing executive should utilize relevant and reliable **Information**, to provide/create effective and efficient **Solutions** for consumers, at **Costs** the consumers are willing to incur, while creating exceptional **Experiences** and developing meaningful long-term **Relationships** with all stakeholders. Each variable of the ISCER model (i.e., Information, Solutions, Costs, Experiences, Relationships) should have a feedback system which would highlight any improvements the marketing executive can make.

Similarly, to some of the proposed models, the variables in the ISCER Marketing Mix are also mixes and in turn have their respective mixes (e.g., Information Mix consists of the Consumer Mix and Market Mix). The ISCER model also acknowledges the importance of some key elements from traditional models and therefore incorporates them. Emphasis is however placed on these elements from the consumer's perspective instead of the company's perspective.



Figure 1: The IS CER Marketing Mix

3.1 Information Mix

This mix is the foundation of the model. The success of the model is contingent on the relevance and reliability of the information used to provide/create solutions for the consumer's problem(s). The Information Mix consists of the Consumer Mix and the Market Mix.

3.1.1 Consumer Mix

An effective and efficient solution cannot be provided or created for a problem that is unclear or unknown. The Consumer Mix seeks to clearly identify the consumer's pain point(s), create buyer/user personas (see Perch, 2021, p. 36-37) and gauge the consumer's feedback on the solutions provided to facilitate continuous improvement.

3.1.2 Market Mix

A comprehensive understanding of the market/industry in which a company seeks to enter or operate in is vital for the growth and development of the company. Continuous research and analysis should therefore be performed on the market structure and market dynamics (*e.g.*, competitors, potential competitors, market shares, barriers to entry, anti-competitive conduct *etc.*).

3.2 Solutions Mix

Whether it is a product and/or service, the goal of a company should be to provide/create an effective and efficient solution that satisfies the consumer's want(s)/need(s). Hence, the Solution Mix encompasses both products and services.

The Solution Mix takes into consideration the:

- Solution's ability to solve the problem(s);
- Quality (Kotler, 1976 and Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Features (Kotler, 1976);
- Options (Kotler, 1976);
- Style (Kotler, 1976);
- Brand name (Kotler, 1976 and Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Packaging (Kotler, 1976);
- Product line (Kotler, 1976);
- Service line (Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Warranty (Kotler, 1976 and Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Service level (Kotler, 1976 and Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Capabilities (Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Price (Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Quality/price interaction (Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Differentiation (Booms and Bitner, 1981); and

- Access to consumer⁵.

3.3 Costs Mix

The Cost Mix encompasses the:

- Customer's own perceived value (Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Discounts and Allowances (Kotler, 1976 and Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Payment terms (Kotler, 1976 and Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Quality/price interaction (Booms and Bitner, 1981);
- Differentiation (Booms and Bitner, 1981); and
- Access to consumer.

3.4 Experiences Mix

The degree of control that a marketing executive may have will vary from company to company but if the company is truly customer-centric, the marketing executive will have control over the experience component as well.

3.4.1 Customer Experience

Managing the customer experience is crucial to a company's growth and development and determines if a company will develop loyal customers and/or brand advocates. As a customer moves down the marketing funnel (see Perch, 2021 p. 39), the marketing executive should ensure that the customer is satisfied at each stage of the process. Companies must remember that every employee represents the company and any interaction (whether positive or negative) employees have with customers can influence the customer's purchasing behavior. This leads this paper to the debate of whether or not customer service can be used as a marketing tool. Parasuraman (2000) makes a strong case for centering marketing strategies around customer service and this paper supports this notion. Marketing executives should therefore insist that all employees undergo customer service training so that they are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to provide an exceptional customer experience.

3.4.2 Employee Experience

Employees' experiences are also important and should never be neglected. Marketing executives should encourage companies to equip employees with the necessary resources (*e.g.*, training, tools, equipment, materials *etc.*) needed to enable them to excel and feel fulfilled in their roles.

3.5 Relationships Mix

Marketing executives should seek to develop long-term meaningful relationships with all stakeholders (*e.g.*, customers, employees, vendors *etc.*). This helps to build trust and loyalty.

3.5.1 Customer Relationships

A customer should feel that his or her point of view is respected, heard and valued (Gibson, 2012), Loyal and repeat customers should be thoughtfully listened to, satisfied and developed (Gibson, 2012). Perch (2021) however, encouraged companies to go beyond developing loyal customers and strive to develop brand advocates. Brand advocates spread their own positive messages and experiences about the company and its solutions. This advocacy is priceless and helps to attract potential customers.

3.5.2 Employee Relationships

Employees should also feel that their perspectives are respected, heard and valued. They must be thoughtfully listened to, satisfied and developed.

It is important that all employees work in unison to ensure customer satisfaction and achieve the corporate goals. This will facilitate the development of meaningful long-term relationships within the company. For example, if performed accurately, the vital information marketing executives obtain from the Information Mix would assist purchasers, developers, manufacturing teams *etc.* in providing/creating solutions to satisfy the wants/needs of consumers.

3.5.3 Buyer-Seller Relationships

Industrial marketers have argued that features such as product complexity and a high degree of interdependence between buyers and sellers have made industrial marketing unique to consumer marketing (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) referenced Webster's (1984) assertion that industrial marketing should be focused on buyer-seller relationships and not products. They also noted Gummesson's (1987) argument that developing long-term relationships was more beneficial than securing immediate sales. Gummesson (1987) believed that personal relationships could prove to be more durable than product or brand loyalties.

The Four Ps model fails to acknowledge the importance of relationships with its scarce references to salesperson-consumer interactions (*e.g.*, insurance and car sales), where mass marketing is inadequate (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). Furthermore, Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) highlighted Webster's (1984) additional argument that the buyer-seller interaction should be a negotiation process and not persuasion as implied by the traditional marketing mix approach.

4. Conclusion

The Marketing Mix consists of the building blocks of a marketing strategy (Blawatt, 2005). It contains a key set of tools marketing executives heavily rely on to develop successful marketing strategies. Over the past (almost) six decades, numerous authors highlighted the shortcoming of the popular Four Ps Marketing Mix developed by McCarthy (1964) and therefore proposed alternatives. All of these alternatives however, appear to suffer from at least one (1) of the following limitations:

1. The model is not applicable to the dynamic marketing environment which exists today (*i.e.*, digital marketing, importance of the customer experience, developing meaningful long-term relationships *etc.*);
2. It is not customer-centric;
3. It is not generic because it was designed for a specific marketing purpose (*e.g.*, product marketing);
4. It includes variables which are not under the control of the marketing executive;
5. It includes numerous variables which makes it difficult to remember; or
6. It includes variable names that marketing executives are not familiar with.

This paper proposes a modern marketing mix which addresses these limitations – The **ISCER Marketing Mix**. ISCER represents **Information, Solutions, Costs, Experiences and Relationships**. The ISCER Marketing Mix insists that to satisfy consumers' wants/needs and gain a competitive advantage, the marketing executive should utilize relevant and reliable **Information**, to provide/create effective and efficient **Solutions** for consumers, at **Costs** the consumers are willing to incur, while creating exceptional **Experiences** and developing meaningful long-term **Relationships** with all stakeholders.

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Notes

¹AMA defines a marketing strategy as “*an organization or person’s plan of action created to sell or advertise a product or service*”.

²Cash on delivery (COD) or collect on delivery is where customers pay for the goods/products ordered at the time of delivery (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

³Authors expressed a need for a generic marketing mix instead of having marketing mixes for specific purposes (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995).

⁴Andreasen (1994) defines social marketing as “*the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part*”.

⁵It is important to note that “Access to Consumer” in the ISCER model relates to how, where and when the consumer wants/needs to acquire the solution. This differs from some traditional models which focus on how, where and when the company seeks to offer the product/service to consumers. It also takes into account the availability of the solution.