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The 4P Classification of the Marketing Mix Revisited

McCarthy's 4P classification of the marketing mix instruments has received wide acceptance in past decades. In recent years, however, increasing criticism has been voiced, among other reasons because of its inherent negative definition of sales promotion and its lack of mutual exclusiveness and collective exhaustiveness. The authors evaluate the 4P classification against the criteria proposed by Hunt and present an improved classification.

> You are right to question the classical principles. All principles should be subjected to the closest examination with respect to both logic and factual relevance.
>
> —Paul A. Samuelson

> McCarthy's classification is especially useful from a pedagogical point of view. Nevertheless, the feeling remains that some other classification, still to be born, will develop better conceptual distinctions among the large variety of marketing decision variables.
>
> —Philip Kotler

THE philosophy of science has always considered classificational schemata of paramount importance. Especially in the early development stages of a discipline, listings and taxonomies are used as pathways to further inquiry. This pattern is highly visible in marketing, where the earliest schools of thought cut through the "wilderness of actual trade and marketing" by drawing categories of actions and functions, institutions, and products (Grether 1967, p. 313; Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett 1988). Taxonomical issues in marketing are considered not only extremely important, but also extremely difficult (Hunt and Hunt 1982). According to Venkatesh (1985, p. 62), marketing has very few carefully developed classificational schemata, which contributes to "our inability to climb the theoretical ladder in any significant way." In this article, we address what can safely be considered the prime classificational scheme in marketing, the 4P configuration of the marketing mix. The concept of the marketing mix is one of the basic ideas of marketing. Nevertheless, its pragmatically developed and widespread 4P classification does not fulfill the requirements of a good taxonomy. It goes without saying that this is an awkward situation. The marketing discipline needs a strong classification of the marketing mix, not only to stimulate conceptual integration and purification of the discipline, but also for meaningful measurement of marketing mix efforts and their effects. Also, managers need a clear classification of all instruments at their disposal in order to assess and

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judge the instruments' objectives, interactions, and restrictions. Last but not least, students in marketing need to work with a clear and logical classification.

We first outline and comment on the origin and application of the 4P classification. Next, we evaluate this taxonomy by using the criteria proposed by Hunt (1991). Taking the observed shortcomings of the 4P typology as a starting point, we then develop some necessary building blocks and finally combine them into a new classification.

Review

The concept of the marketing mix was reportedly introduced by Neil Borden in his presidential address to the AMA in 1953. He got his idea from James Culliton, who described the business executive as somebody who combines different ingredients. The term "marketing mix" therefore referred to the mixture of elements useful in pursuing a certain market response. To facilitate practical application of the concept to concrete operating problems, early writers on the marketing mix sought to itemize the large number of influences on market response that marketers must take into account (Oxenfeldt 1962). Frey (1956) and Borden (1964) adopted a checklist approach, providing a handy device for understanding the complex and interrelated nature of marketing activities. Frey even related it explicitly and directly to the development of marketing plans. Other authors developed more succinct and convenient classifications of marketing activities that could be easily memorized and systematically diagrammed (Frey 1961; Howard 1957; Lazer and Kelly 1962; McCarthy 1960). Of the many schemata proposed, only McCarthy's has survived and it has become the "dominant design" or "received view." His 4P formula discerned four classes, Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, Promotion itself being split into advertising, personal selling, publicity (in the sense of free advertising), and sales promotion. Presumably because of its very pithy and easy-to-remember reproduction of some undeniable basic principles, it has become the most cited and the most often used classification system for the marketing mix, both in the marketing literature and in marketing practice. Hence, the 4P system may well be called the traditional classification of the marketing mix.

In the remainder of this section we summarize the acceptance of the 4P classification by marketing authors and the way they use and comment on it. Because of space limitations, the review is limited to several general marketing textbooks and textbooks on communication and/or promotion. Narrowing the scope somewhat more, we concentrate on publications written in English and mainly during the late 1970s and the 1980s. During this period most authors followed the 4P classification as well as its accompanying subdivision of the fourth promotional P (e.g., Ames and Hlavacek 1984; Bagozzi 1986; Bell 1979; Cunningham and Cunningham 1981; Engel, Wales, and Warshaw 1975; Evans and Berman 1988; Gwinner et al. 1977; Hartley 1976; Kinnear and Bernhardt 1986; Lazer and Culley 1983; Mandell and Rosenberg 1981; McDaniel 1982; Pride and Ferrell 1980; Robin 1978; Stanley 1982; Stanton 1978; Udell and Laczniak 1981; Zikmund and d'Amico 1986). The following observations come to the fore:

- Several authors stress the hybrid nature of the fourth P, mentioning the presence of two important dimensions, "communication" and "promotion" (or persuasion), and the vagueness of the borderline between these two dimensions.
- Many authors underline the persuasive or selling character of the broad "promotional" category, the "sales promotion" category being the most diverse.
- Some of them call the fourth P alternatively "communication" and consequently stress the dominantly communicative character of this variable.
- A relatively large number of authors complain about the catch-all function of the sales promotion category in the 4P scheme. Stanton (1978) synthesizes the general idea very strongly and clearly: "Sales promotion is one of the most loosely used terms in the marketing vocabulary . . . sales promotion is muddled, misused, and misunderstood."
- Given the unclear distinction between communication, promotion, and sales promotion, it is not surprising that some authors mix up the terms "promotion" and "sales promotion."
- Some authors use a classification that comes close to the 4P classification, but without stating or defending it explicitly (e.g., Dalrymple and Parsons 1983; Heskett 1976; Hughes 1978).

A remarkable change occurred during the 1980s, however. A great many authors, though still using the catch-all category of sales promotion within McCarthy's 4P-classification, tried to define it not in a residual, negative way but in a positive way (e.g., Ailloni-Charas 1984; Bennett 1988; Cravens and Woodruff 1986; Kotler 1988; McCarthy 1981; McDaniel 1982; Nickels 1980; Ulanoff 1985). Recurring elements in the definition of sales promotion and/or in the related comments (though both are sometimes rather partial) are:

- the complementary nature of sales promotion activities,
- the short term of its positive effects,
- its nonproductivity or even counterproductivity in the long run,
- the very wide variety of instruments used, and
- the existence of three broad fundamental target groups: final consumers, trade institutions, and the firm's own salesforce.

From this review, one may conclude that the 4P classification is very widely—if not almost exclusively—

used in marketing. The same holds for the subdivision of the fourth P into personal selling, advertising, publicity, and finally sales promotion as a residual category. The shortcomings of this way of classifying, however, have become increasingly apparent.

Assessment of the 4P Classification

We elaborate on the criteria for evaluating classificational schemata proposed by Hunt (1991) to provide an assessment of the 4P scheme.

Does the Schema Adequately Specify the Phenomena to Be Classified?

Before classifying the ingredients of the marketing mix, one first must identify the nature of these ingredients. Surprisingly, the literature does not agree on what exactly the marketing mix is a mixture of. Some early writers such as Borden (1964), Frey (1956), and Staudt and Taylor (1965) view these elements as procedures, policies, and processes (i.e., activities), whereas most authors today (e.g., Kotler 1988, p. 71) depict them as parameters, tools, or instruments (i.e., objects).

Does the Schema Adequately Specify the Properties or Characteristics on Which the Classification Is Based?

This criterion can be split into several subelements:

1. Have properties or characteristics been identified?
2. Are these properties or characteristics appropriate for classificatory purposes?
3. Are the operational procedures for applying the classificatory properties or characteristics intersubjectively unambiguous? Is there a high interjudge reliability?

Here lies a second surprise. To our knowledge, the classificatory property(-ies) or rationale for distinguishing four categories labeled "product," "price," "place," and "promotion" have never been explicated. So, the answer to question 1 is negative. In consequence, questions 2 and 3 cannot be answered. Though casual observation of practitioners, students, and textbooks suggests a general consensus to classify marketing mix elements in the same categories, the lack of any formal and precise specification of the properties or characteristics according to which marketing mix elements should be classified is a major flaw.

Does the Schema Have Categories That Are Mutually Exclusive?

According to Kerlinger (1973, p. 139), the "mutual exclusiveness" and the "adequate specification of properties or characteristics" criteria are closely related. In view of the poor performance of the 4P scheme on the latter, it is not surprising to note some problems as to the mutual exclusiveness of the four Ps. Indeed, the sales promotion subcategory of promotion overlaps to a large extent with the advertising and personal selling subcategories (Ferrée 1983; Van Acker 1962) and with the product, price, and place categories (Cross, Hartley, and Rexeisen 1985; Gaidis and Cross 1985; Gussekloo and Strating 1985; Leeflang and Beukenkamp 1981; Shapiro 1985; van Waterschoot and Voet 1987, 1988).

Does the Schema Have Categories That Are Collectively Exhaustive?

Each item must be capable of being assigned to a category. As Hunt (1991, p. 188) notes, "all classification systems can be made collectively exhaustive by the simple expedient of adding that ubiquitous category 'other.' However, the size of this category should be monitored carefully. If too many phenomena can find no home except other, then the system should be examined carefully . . .." Again, the sales promotion catch-all appears to be the weak spot of the 4P schema. In view of the increasing importance of these activities (Schultz 1987; Strang 1976), this situation is very awkward.

Is the Schema Useful? Does It Adequately Serve Its Intended Purposes?

The 4P scheme has turned out to be a very useful device for practitioners and students (and textbook writers) who need to structure management tasks and marketing plans. Theoretically, however, the scheme appears to be much less fruitful. Two drawbacks are apparent. First, the four Ps fall short as building blocks for true theory development about marketing mix interaction (Reidenbach and Olivia 1981, p. 30; Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett 1988, p. 105). Second, the P of product (and not products) may have contributed to an ignorance of all kinds of cost, sales, and competition interdependencies among products (cf. Wind and Robertson 1983).

Our assessment of the 4P scheme revealed three major flaws, clarification of which should lead to a fundamentally better classificational schema of the marketing mix:

- The properties or characteristics that are the basis for classification have not been identified.
- The categories are not mutually exclusive.
- There is a catch-all subcategory that is continually growing in importance.

Those three flaws, however, are closely related: the first and second pertain to the absence of any explicit definition of classificational dimension(s) and all three pertain to the sales promotion subcategory.

Toward a Functional Classification of the Marketing Mix

Basically, the mode of building a classification used here is a deductive process wherein the schema is developed before the researcher analyzes any specific set of data. This logical partitioning, as the method is called, "presupposes a fairly sophisticated understanding of the phenomena being investigated, else the classifications involved may be totally unrealistic, nothing better than an inspired guess" (David Harvey, cited by Hunt 1991, p. 181). Judging the discipline's understanding of the various mix elements to be adequate for classificatory purposes, we start our endeavor by proposing suitable criteria.

P_1: Marketing functions are appropriate properties for classifying the marketing mix.

If one views the classification of the marketing mix to be a device to help structure marketing decision making and management, the objectives the marketer is pursuing while using it seem to be appropriate as a classificational dimension (Leeflang 1979; Leeflang and Koerts 1970). For this classification mode to be effective, two conditions must be fulfilled. First, one must identify generic marketing objectives, by which we mean universal intermediate objectives that must be achieved for an exchange to come about. In other words, one must elaborate a list of necessary conditions that is valid for each and every marketing exchange. However, in view of the marketing mix concept's managerial perspective, one need not take all these necessary conditions into account. Only conditions whose fulfillment is at the marketer's discretion must be considered. In marketing theory, these are known as marketing functions. Second, this list of marketing functions must be elaborated or interpreted in such a way that every marketing mix element can be assigned to one and only one function. This is necessary to achieve mutual exclusiveness and collective exhaustiveness. Such a functional classification effort is based on the exchange concept of marketing, and more particularly on the concept of generic marketing functions. Hence, before presenting an improved classification, we show how its rationale is vested in the marketing literature, more specifically in the "marketing and exchange" body and in the functional school of thought.

Marketing and Exchange

Houston and Gassenheimer (1987) identified a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for an exchange to take place, albeit in noncompetitive market situations only. Some of these conditions refer to characteristics of human beings, the number of parties involved, and their freedom to accept or reject the offer. Obviously, they are beyond the parties' discretion and hence beyond the scope of the marketing mix. Several conditions are relevant to our discussion, however:

1. Each party has something valued by the other.
2. Each party is capable of communicating about the offering.
3. Each party is capable of making the offering available.
4. Each party believes it is appropriate or desirable to deal with the other party. Each party must value the offered benefits highly enough to offset the efforts and risks involved in the exchange, that is, the perceived price (see Murphy and Enis 1986).

These are the four necessary conditions for an exchange to take place that can be met unilaterally by prospective exchange parties' efforts. Marketers engaging in behavior directed at consummating exchanges should try to fulfill each of them. Hence:

P_2: There are four generic marketing functions: configuration, valuation, facilitation, and symbolization.

This quartet of universal intermediate marketing objectives suggested by the exchange literature was identified by Kotler in his classic 1972 article. The four items are also present in the 1985 AMA definition of marketing (*Marketing News* 1985) and in Hunt's (1983) fundamental explanandum of the behavior of sellers directed at consummating exchanges. At closer inspection, the 4Ps appear to be a scheme classifying marketing activities according to their generic function except (!) for the "sales promotion" activities, as we explain subsequently. As a matter of fact, the suggestion to use marketing functions as classification criteria seems to have been partly realized for decades.

Marketing Functions

The key idea of the preceding discussion is to differentiate between functions and the specific tools used or activities performed in achieving those functions. This critical distinction has been present in marketing theory for decades and has even been called crucial for a correct conceptualization of marketing management, but has never gained much attention (Enis and Mokwa 1979; Fullbrook 1940, p. 234; Lewis and Erickson 1969, p. 12; McGarry 1950, p. 268). According to McGarry and to Lewis and Erickson, functions are actually the output entities of the marketing system (i.e., its intermediate ends), whereas activities or instruments are the input of the marketing system (i.e., its means). There is a broad consensus that marketing functions are generic and necessary conditions that must be met for exchanges to take place (Breyer 1934, p. 24; McCarthy 1960, p. 32; McGarry 1950, p. 268; Savitt 1988, p. 116). Following another central tenet of the functional school of thought (McGarry 1950; Sheth and Gross 1988), we state:

P_3: Marketing functions can be accomplished through a variety of specific activities or tools.

Following Staudt and Taylor (1965), we also put forward:

P_4: Any specific marketing activity or tool can serve several functions simultaneously.

This proposition implies that one cannot relate each marketing mix element unambiguously to one single function. At best, one may hope to classify mix elements according to their *main* function, as we discuss subsequently. Here, however, we present an even more important (and more hopeful) implication. Remember the observation that all major flaws of the 4P scheme are related to promotion, especially to an overlap of sales promotion with other elements. Because of the lack of a clear one-to-one relationship between functions and activities or instruments, one can conjecture that further elucidation could come from a closer inspection of the sales promotion elements' function.

The Sales Promotion Concept

Sales promotion challenges any marketing mix classification effort with three closely interrelated problems: semantic, definitional, and classificational. First, the term "sales promotion" has been used to denote at least three different concepts: (1) the entire marketing mix (e.g., Oxenfeldt 1962), (2) marketing communications (according to Anderson and Rubin 1986, p. 275), and (3) a catch-all for all communication instruments that do not fit in the advertising, personal selling, or publicity subcategories. Sometimes, however, "promotion" is used to refer to that catch-all subcategory (e.g., Rossiter and Percy 1987). Needless to say, the use of a single term to denote several distinct concepts leads to fuzziness and confusion (see Bunge 1967; Zaltman, Pinson, and Angelmar 1973).

The second major problem with sales promotion is the lack of a generally accepted positive definition, which makes it difficult to develop a research framework and actually conduct research in that area. In consequence, many managerial issues such as what type of sales promotion to use in particular circumstances, how much of it to use, and how to assess its effectiveness remain unresolved (Cross, Hartley, and Rexeisen 1985; Page 1985; Strang 1980).

We have already discussed the third major problem: when the catch-all definition is used, many sales promotion activities appear to overlap with other mix elements. This is not in line with the mutual exclusiveness criterion. The overlap, however, is not exclusively due to poor definition, but can safely be considered an inherent characteristic of sales promotion. Indeed, in their authoritative textbook, Schultz and Robinson (1982, p. 24) note that sales promotion often acts as "the bridge between the various elements in the marketing mix." In a similar vein, Wolfe and Twedt (1970) remarked that in functionally organized marketing departments, the detailed work of sales promotion is regularly assigned to the sales, advertising, and sales promotion departments simultaneously. Finally, Peter and Olson (1987, p. 529) observed that many sales promotion instruments "can be classified as either sales promotion or some other marketing or promotion tool, depending on their use." Hence, whether a certain instrument is promotional or not depends on the use the marketer makes of it, not on some inherent characteristic. These observations imply that, logically, some kind of overlap between sales promotion and other mix categories is in fact a desirable feature for a marketing mix classification scheme. This overlap, however, should be conscious, deliberate, well-thought-out, and explicit, not accidental as in the 4P scheme.

P_5: Deliberate and explicit overlap between sales promotion and other mix categories is a desirable feature for a marketing mix classification scheme.

The first step in addressing these three intertwined problems is to develop an acceptable and positive definition of sales promotion (Ailloni-Charas 1984; Page 1985). Over the years, and especially recently, many attempts have been undertaken. A review of 28 definitions and discussions suggests three groups of definitions. Nine of them consider inducement to enhance sales as the most essential characteristic of sales promotion (Ailloni-Charas 1984; Beem and Shaffer 1981; Frey 1957; Luick and Ziegler 1968; Peter and Olson 1987; Pride and Ferrell 1980; Rossiter and Percy 1987; Schultz and Robinson 1982; Shimp and DeLozier 1986). A small minority of only four references stress the nonroutine, short-duration element as its most distinct and essential feature (Bennett 1988; Buzzell et al. 1972; ter Gorst and Kokshoorn 1987; Zikmund and d'Amico 1986). The third group, comprising as many as 15 references, combine the two aspects—a combination that, in fact, appears inevitable (Anderson and Rubin 1986; Boddewyn and Lardi 1989; Cravens and Woodruff 1986; Everaert 1990; Floor and van Raaij 1989; Gussekloo and Strating 1985; Kotler 1988; Leeflang and Beukenkamp 1981: McDaniel 1982; Quelch 1989; Schultz 1987; Strang 1980; Van Acker 1962; van Waterschoot and Voet 1987; Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty 1989).

The first group, a substantial minority, view sales promotion as activities directed at inducing potential exchange partners to consummate the exchange immediately. This idea of "moving the sales forward" is in line with the term's Latin root (Rossiter and Percy 1987) and with the concept's historical origins of offering an additional incentive (Toop 1978). The third

group, the majority, also conceive sales promotion as inducements, but explicitly add the constraint of short duration and nonroutineness. For the normal "basic," "long-term," and "ongoing" marketing programs, they reason, inducing the potential exchange partner to consummate the exchange immediately will require a temporary reformulation or "actualization" of the basic formula. It seems quite acceptable that a sudden shift in behavior can be realized only by a shift in stimuli. Furthermore, this short-term inducement view is in line with current knowledge of behavior modification techniques, which are believed more efficient and sometimes even more effective when used on an irregular or intermittent basis than when used continually. Also, using an incentive too long would cause the target person to alter his or her anchor point (Ferrée 1978; Krishna, Currim, and Shoemaker 1991; Leeflang and Beukenkamp 1981; Nord and Peter 1980: Peter and Nord 1982; Peter and Olson 1987; Rothschild and Gaidis 1981; van Raaij 1987). Though short-term duration is an essential characteristic to delineate the concept of sales promotion, it may pose practical drawbacks when used as a single classification criterion as the second group propose. Hardy (1984) found duration to be relative to the specific type of sales promotion. Hence, as an operational yardstick in the classification process, it might provoke intersubjective ambiguity and result in low interjudge reliability.

The idea of activities directed at inducing potential exchange partners to consummate the exchange immediately not only seems the essence of the concept of sales promotion, but also has major classificational implications. It means that sales promotion is not a subcategory of communication instruments (Beem and Shaffer 1981). Instead, sales promotion may pervade all four Ps.

Generic Marketing Functions Revisited

Having offered some building blocks for a rigorous concept of sales promotion, we now move the argument one step forward by exploring the link between sales promotion and generic marketing functions. Viewing sales promotion elements as inducements means that they are not limited to communication instruments performing the same generic function as personal selling, advertising, or publicity. Communication activities rely on a variety of media to create awareness, provide knowledge, and motivate use desires, whereas sales promotion amplifies the decision to buy and accelerates the execution of the buying decision (Ailloni-Charas 1984; Rossiter and Percy 1987). Similar ideas have been put forward by Beem and Shaffer (1981). In their wording, persuasive communication is used to overcome a lack of awareness or appreciation (information barriers), or a lack of credibility (credibility barriers), or even to change in the preference structure of prospects, in this way overcoming benefits barriers. In contrast to these three "barriers to wanting," sales promotion tackles "barriers to acting" such as physical and psychological inertia barriers, risk barriers, or competitive barriers from close substitutes (Beem and Shaffer 1981, p. 16–18). The very existence of sales promotion efforts suggests that the list of four generic marketing functions deduced previously is somehow incomplete. In the market reality, offering a bundle of benefits for an acceptable price, making it available, and making the target parties knowledgeable about it apparently do not always suffice to make the potential exchange partner consummate the exchange. Sometimes, "triggers to customer action" seem necessary or at least desirable. Direct inducement or provocation is in some situations a necessary condition for the exchange to take place. Hence, it can be seen as a "situational" or "complementary" marketing function.

P_6: In the presence of important barriers to action, direct inducement of the prospective exchange partner is necessary for the exchange to take place. This inducement function is not generic, but only situational.

An Improved Classification of the Marketing Mix

At this point, we are ready to deduce a new taxonomy from our propositions. An improved marketing mix classification logically must score better on the criteria for which the 4P-scheme shows weaknesses without scoring worse on its relatively strong points. We therefore follow the format of a check against the five evaluative criteria used before.

Specification of the Phenomena to Be Classified

The 4P classification can be criticized for not being explicit enough in this regard. A marketing mix classification in our view should explicitly make clear that it tries to schematize all the controllable demand-impinging instruments that are combined into a marketing program used by the firm to achieve a certain level and type of response from its target market.

Specification of the Properties on Which the Classification Is Based

A defendable marketing mix classification in our view might be based on two explicit criteria: the main generic function performed and the basic versus complementary nature of the specific instrument's use.

Generic function. A defendable first criterion for classifying marketing mix instruments is the generic function they mainly fulfill. Elements of the marketing mix are used in performing the functions necessary for making the exchange happen. We call these

functions "generic" as they necessarily must be fulfilled for a transaction to come about and as they encompass all conceivable more specific elements within the marketing mix. These four generic functions can be summarized as:

1. Configuring something valued by the prospective exchange party.
2. Determining the compensation and the sacrifices the prospective exchange party must make in exchange for the offer.
3. Placing the offer at the disposal of the prospective exchange party.
4. Bringing the offer to the attention of the prospective exchange party, keeping its attention on the offer, and influencing—normally in a positive way—its feeling and preferences about the offer. This is communicating the offer.

Sales promotion is not taken up as a separate generic functional category, as this category is not essential to bring about a transaction. One must keep in mind that each of these generic functions can be realized by several marketing mix instruments and categories. Any particular category of marketing mix elements, however, has as its primary role the fulfillment of a certain generic function and the other marketing mix categories play a secondary part in the fulfillment of that function. The matrix representation in Table 1 illustrates this idea. For example, the satisfaction of the buyer's needs will be fulfilled mainly by the product characteristics, but the other marketing mix categories can add to that result. Indeed, in some cases a high price can assuage the status needs of the consumer, as can the use of an exclusive distribution network or advertising the purchased brand through a highly regarded medium. It therefore seems logical and inevitable that when the generic marketing mix functions are used as a classification base for the marketing mix instruments, the latter should be classified according to their main functional category, even if the attendant functions are also of practical importance in the operational execution of the marketing strategy.

Basic versus complementary nature of the instruments. The second criterion for subdivision of the marketing mix is the distinction between instruments that are basic to the consummation of an offer and instruments that are more complementary. Indeed, we can also meaningfully divide the marketing mix into instruments that have a proportionally fixed composition over a long period and those that are applied over a shorter period as additional incentives to move the exchange forward. This supplementary mix actually contains the elements fulfilling the previously mentioned "situational" function that are usually found in the sales promotion mix. However, we define this mix in a positive and not in a residual manner and do not limit it to the narrow domain of communication instruments, but spread it out over all the major classes of marketing instruments.

P_7: The promotional mix positively defined contains demand-impinging instruments that have no power of themselves but can, during relatively short periods of time, complement and sustain the basic instruments of the marketing mix (namely product, price, distribution, and communication) for the purpose of stimulating prospective exchange partners (commonly referred to as target market(s)) to a significant degree of desirable forms of immediate, overt behavior.

Promotions imply that there is a sound basic marketing mix that might need support in some circumstances. Some promotions are linked mainly to the communication function of the marketing mix. Other promotions are much closer to the family of product-mix instruments (e.g., a temporary offer of luxury options on a car at the price of its standard model) or to the family of price-mix instruments (e.g., temporary discounts). Hence, the promotional mix comprises a supplementary class of instruments that can be split up in exactly the same way as the basic instruments of the marketing mix. They are used mostly as tactical adaptations to external circumstances. The aim of promotions in the preceding definition is to stimulate tar-

TABLE 1
Relative Importance of Diverse Marketing Mix Instruments in the Fulfillment of Generic Marketing Functions

Generic Function	Product Instruments	Price Instruments	Distribution Instruments	Communication Instruments
Configuration of something valued by the prospective exchange party	xxxxx	x	x	x
Determination of the compensation and sacrifices to be brought by the prospective exchange party	x	xxxxx	x	x
Placing the offer at the disposal of the prospective exchange party	x	x	xxxxx	x
Bringing the offer to the attention of the prospective exchange party and influencing its feelings and preferences about it	x	x	x	xxxxx

TABLE 2
An Improved Classification of the Marketing Mix[a]

				Communication Mix		
Marketing Mix	**Product Mix**	**Price Mix**	**Distribution Mix**	**Mass Communication Mix**	**Personal Communication Mix**	**Publicity Mix**
Basic Mix	Basic Product Mix	Basic Price Mix	Basic Distribution Mix	Basic Mass Communication Mix	Basic Personal Communication Mix	Basic Publicity Mix
	Instruments that mainly aim at the satisfaction of the prospective exchange party's needs	Instruments that mainly fix the size and the way of payment exchanged for the goods or services	Instruments that mainly determine the intensity and manner of how the goods or services will be made available	Nonpersonal communication efforts that mainly aim at announcing the offer or maintaining awareness and knowledge about it: evoking or maintaining favorable feelings and removing barriers to wanting	Personal communication efforts that mainly aim at announcing the offer or maintaining awareness and knowledge about it; evoking or maintaining favorable feelings and removing barriers to wanting	Efforts that aim at inciting a third party (persons and authorities) to favorable communication about the offer
	e.g.: product characteristics options, assortment, brand name, packaging, quantity, factory guarantee	e.g.: list price, usual terms of payment, usual discounts, terms of credit, long-term savings campaigns	e.g.: different types of distribution channels, density of the distribution system, trade relation mix (policy of margins, terms of delivery, etc.), merchandising advice	e.g.: theme-advertising in various media, permanent exhibitions, certain forms of sponsoring	e.g.: amount and type of selling, personal remunerations	e.g.: press bulletins, press conferences, tours by journalists
Promotion Mix	Product Promotion Mix	Price Promotion Mix	Distribution Promotion Mix	Mass Communication Promotion Mix	Personal Communication Promotion Mix	Publicity Promotion Mix
	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic product mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic price mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic distribution mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic mass communication mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic personal communication mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic publicity mix during relatively short periods of time
	e.g.: economy packs, 3-for-the-price-of-2 deals, etc.; temporary luxury options on a car at the price of its standard model	e.g.: exceptionally favorable price, end-of-season sales, exceptionally favorable terms of payment and credit, short-term savings campaigns, temporary discounts, coupons	e.g.: extra point of purchase material, trade promotions such as buying allowances, sales contests, etc.; temporary increase of the number of distribution points	e.g.: action advertising, contests, sweepstakes, samples, premiums, trade shows or exhibitions	e.g.: temporary demonstrations, salesforce promotions such as salesforce contests, etc.	e.g.: all measures to stimulate positive publicity about a sales promotion action

[a]Adapted from van Waterschoot and Voet (1988, p. 356).

get groups to a significant degree of desirable forms of immediate, overt behavior. Such behavior usually consists of straight buying. However, other forms of overt behavior also can be envisaged, such as information gathering. Many promotional activities and actions in business marketing and direct marketing are directed not at stimulating immediate purchase, but at moving the prospect one step forward in the buying process. Free sampling, clearly a promotional activity, is used to induce trial use, not buying. Hence, we prefer not to use the term "sales promotion" because it unnecessarily narrows the scope of the class of instruments to which it refers. Instead, we propose the more general term "promotion" for such inducements, which is also more in line with the everyday vocabulary of many practitioners.

Mutual Exclusiveness and Collective Exhaustiveness

The combination of the preceding two classification criteria results in a marketing mix schedule that is mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. In the suggested new scheme, represented in Table 2, the basic product mix comprises basic instruments that aim at the satisfaction of the buyer's needs, whereas the product promotion mix contains complementary instruments that aim at supporting the basic product mix on a temporary basis. The other submixes are determined in a comparable way. For the names of the categories, we aim at expressions that are defendable on logical grounds and that correspond as much as possible to terms in common use in the marketing jargon, such as "price promotions." Moreover, the proposed representation has many similarities to the well-known distinction between the "above the line" and the "below the line" activities. In addition, the popular typology of customer, trade, and salesforce promotions (e.g., Shapiro 1977) fits within the new taxonomy. Trade promotions fit in the distribution promotion class, salesforce promotions fit in the personal communication promotion class, and customer promotions fit in the the other promotion categories.

Usefulness

Finally, this more explicit and logical marketing mix classification is arguably of more use than the classical 4 Ps. Indeed, because it better delineates the distinct classes and more explicitly emphasizes their complementarity, researchers as well as managers should be more able to determine and judge marketing instruments on their objectives, interactions, and restrictions. In addition, the framework's rationale is firmly vested in marketing theory, especially the exchange paradigm and the functional school of thought, and is in line with recent insights about behavior modification techniques in consumer behavior, as well as with the state of the art in promotion management. As meeting ground of "pure" marketing theory, consumer behavior, and managerial action, it could prove to be a valuable basis for new integrative theoretical developments. The propositions we offer can be of some value in giving direction and focus to such efforts. The scheme developed is of immediate value for promotional issues in particular. Indeed, for decades the marketing discipline has lacked a positive and widely agreed upon definition of sales promotion, which has made it difficult to develop a research framework and actually carry out research in that area (Page 1985, p. 71).

In sum, the new classification responds positively to the three fundamental flaws in the 4P scheme. In addition, it is more useful for theoretical development, empirical research, and managerial decision making. Its only drawback, an inferior mnemotechnic appeal for educational uses in comparison with the 4P, is far outweighed by these important advantages.

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