



The Market Mix Concept

The **marketing mix** is probably the most famous marketing term. Its elements are the basic, tactical components of a product/service development and marketing plan. Also known as the **Four P's**, the *marketing mix* elements are **price, place, product, and promotion**.

The concept is simple. Think about another common mix - a cake mix. All cakes contain eggs, milk, flour, and sugar. However, you can alter the final cake by altering the amounts of mix elements contained in it. So for a sweet cake add more sugar!



To create the right marketing mix, businesses have to meet the following conditions:

- The **product** (or service) has to have the right features - for example, it must look good and work well – so presentation, packaging, varieties, design, colour, styles and materials might all be important.
- The **price** must be right. Even if you decide not to charge for a service, it is useful to realise that this is still a pricing strategy. Identifying the total cost to the user (which is likely to be higher than the charge you make) is a part of the price element.
- The goods or service must be offered in the right **place** at the right time. Making sure that the goods arrive or service is delivered when and where they are wanted is an important operation. Looking at location (e.g. of a newspaper stand) and where a service is delivered (e.g. to the home) can make the difference between success and failure.
- The target group needs to be made aware of the existence and availability of the product or service through **promotion**. Promotion includes advertising, personal selling (e.g. attending exhibitions) and sales promotions (e.g. special offers). Public Relations are included within Promotion by many marketing people (though PR people tend to see it as a separate discipline).

The marketing mix was first developed over 40 years ago. It was designed to suggest that you have a balance mix of marketing in your marketing plan. Since then many experts have looked at the marketing mix and suggested it is much deeper in that business success is driven by PEOPLE and PROCESS.

The 4 Cs

Others now dismiss the Ps as being out of date and have developed Cs.

- Place becomes Convenience
- Price becomes Cost to the user
- Promotion becomes Communication
- Product becomes Customer needs and wants

These C's reflect a more client-oriented marketing philosophy. They provide useful reminders - for example that you need to bear in mind the convenience of the client when deciding where to offer a service. Some would argue that the marketing mix is too product-oriented, and that modern marketing should not focus on it. However, it does provide a handy framework for marketing analysis. The C's are also not nearly as memorable as the P-words, and marketing books still tend to use the latter to describe the elements of the mix.

The Unique Selling Point

Another useful concept is the Unique Selling Point.

In his book *Reality in Advertising*, Rosser Reeves (Chairman of the Board at Ted Bates & Company) gives the precise definition as it was understood at his company:

- Each advertisement must make a proposition to the customer: "buy this product, and you will get *this specific benefit*."
- The proposition itself must be unique - something that competitors do not, or will not, offer.
- The proposition must be strong enough to pull new customers to the product.

However, Reeves warns against forming a USP based on what he calls "The Deceptive Differential" - a uniqueness that is too small or too technical for customers to observe the differences in actual practice.

What is your USP? *Why* do people buy *your* product or service and not somebody else's? What is your plus point? Identify it and build on it. Be careful not to lose it.

It is sometimes helpful to think of your product or service as benefits and imagine that you are selling benefits, not products; the benefit can be status, entertainment, enjoyment, attractiveness or convenience just as much as nourishment or protection.

Some rules for successful marketing

- Good marketers sell goods that do not come back to customers who do.
- Successful marketing is a matter of building and sustaining human relationships
- Put yourself in the customer's shoes.
- Make it easy for people to do business with you.