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# Development possibilities of the major marketing approaches

## ABSTRACT

*The general purpose of this article is to develop marketing theory and practice. The objective of the article is to examine the development possibilities of marketing theory and practice by improving the usability and use of major approaches of marketing i.e. mix marketing and relationship marketing. In this context, there principally are three different opportunities to develop marketing theory and practice: the development of marketing mix, development of relationship marketing and combining these major marketing approaches. As we have seen many researchers have developed marketing mix approaches by adding more parameters. The risk of this – like adding more relationships – is that the approaches can become too complicated, more elements can be incorporated and controllability can suffer. The development of relationship marketing has also its challenges especially because relationship marketing still is a strongly developing area in marketing. When combining these major approaches many weaknesses of marketing mix approach can be replaced with the help of relationship marketing approach and vice versa. A combining solution could be of the type of Lehtinen's RELMIX-model where both approaches are combined and they are supporting each other. The results of all seven empirical studies seemed to prove that there are evident caps between the practice and separate theories of marketing mix and relationship marketing. They also seemed to confirm the vision of Lehtinen's studies that there is a lot of parallel use of both approaches, a significant use of approaches combined to same extend and at the same time a firm need for more combining the marketing approaches, which is realized in practice in various ways.*

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.1. Background

Marketing mix approach (sometimes identified with transaction approach or parameter approach) and relationship marketing (management) approach are generally considered as the major approaches of marketing theory and practice. Many researchers claim that a paradigm shift is occurring from mix marketing toward relationship marketing (see e.g. Grönroos 1994). For a longer time marketing has been moving to an interactive style which encourages a dialogue between the deliverer and the customer (see already Lehtinen 1983). The relationship approach to marketing challenges many traditional cornerstones of marketing, such as the definition of marketing variables, and the marketing department as a useful organizational solution.

However, some researchers (e.g. Lehtinen 1995 and Möller and Halinen 2000) have, argued that there is not yet any well developed theory of relationship marketing. The situation is still about the same. There is a changing variety of partial descriptions and theories focusing on the content of the phenomena researchers have labelled relationship marketing (Payne 2006).

According to Lehtinen (2007) products must in any case be designed, priced, distributed, communicated and sold, the staff must be chosen, trained and rewarded, the physical surroundings must be looked after and the processes must be planned and implemented (7 Ps by Booms and Bitner 1981). This means that mix approach can not disappear.

Relationship marketing and traditional mix marketing are not mutually exclusive and they are not in unsolvable conflict with each other. More reasons for combining are presented by Lehtinen (2011). Actually, the two major approaches have never been fully separated. Both approaches have some strengths and weaknesses. Lehtinen (e.g. 2007 and 2011) suggest that the many main weaknesses of parameter marketing can be replaced with the help of relationship marketing and parameter marketing is helpful as an operational level for the relationship marketing.

### 1.2. The objectives of the article

Both the traditional mix approach and relationship approach have remained at the very center of marketing theory and practice. Therefore, we naturally start believing in the vitality of these major marketing approaches, though approaches can be changed and developed. Naturally there are other approaches, too. (see e.g. Sheth, Gardner and Carrett 1988)

The general purpose of this paper is to examine the development possibilities of marketing theory and practice by analysing the two major marketing approaches, i.e. marketing mix and relationship marketing. The general purpose is divided into the following research questions describing at the same time the objectives of the study:

1. What are the development possibilities of marketing mix approach?
2. What are the development possibilities of relationship marketing approach?
3. What are the development possibilities of the new marketing approach through combining mix marketing and relationship marketing approaches?

We can already assume that all these possibilities of development must be utilized to achieve the best results from the viewpoint of marketing theory and practice. Here we can naturally describe only some development possibilities.

## **2. DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES OF MIX MARKETING APPROACHES**

### **2.1. Marketing mix approaches and their challenges**

The core of traditional marketing is marketing mix. The marketer lends or plans various competitive parameters and determines their levels in the marketing mix. The main practice in devising a marketing plan has been to determine the level on which the marketing mix parameters will be placed.

According to the general belief, Culliton (1948) was the first to write about the elements of mix, which were 12. Gradually mix became settled to the 4 Ps (McCarthy 1960). The strength of the 4 Ps approach is that it represent a memorable and practical framework for marketing decision-making and it has proved useful for case study analyses in business schools for many years (Jobber 2001). However, it is probable that business executives do not really view all 4 Ps as being equally important. For example Kellerman, Gordon and Hekmat (1995) consider the price and product components to be the most important. This side of mix approaches is, however, studied scantily.

In its marketing plan a company can define its own essentials in addition the product, price, place (or distribution or availability), promotion (or communication) with participants (or people), physical evidence (or surroundings) and processes (7 Ps). Ultimately the goal has been to find a solution to the following problem: how to develop the optimal marketing mix that covers all the parameters considered (Kotler 1967 and 1971). Naturally, the optimum composition of marketing parameters of a firm should also be based on e.g. company, line of business and competitive situation. Therefore, we cannot expect to find a generally optimal mix for any company (cf. Baker 1993).

According to Grönroos (1994) the 4 Ps may have been helpful from a management point of view at one time, at least for the marketers of consumer packaged goods. The behavior of a firm in competition has become more organized. Grönroos (1994), however, said that 4 Ps are never applicable to all markets and to all types of market situations.

The mix models are most useful when marketing low value consumer products. Most industrial products, services and high value consumer products require at least relational adjustments

to mix models. According to many researches (see e.g. Patterson and Ward 2000, Constantinides 2006, Möller 2006, Fakeideas 2008) mix marketing have some common features:

- it is void of theoretical content; it works primarily as a simplistic device focusing the attention of management
- customer is seen as passive and customer contact is moderate
- it does not mention relationship building, which has become a major marketing focus, or the experiences of the consumers
- product is stated in the singular but most companies do not sell a product in isolation. Marketers sell product lines or brands, all interconnected in the mind of the consumer
- the conceptualization of the mix implies that marketers are the central element. But this is not the case. Marketing is meant to be ‘customer-focused management’
- it does not take into consideration the unique elements of services marketing
- short time-scale
- focus on a single sale
- orientation on product and its features
- tend to be function oriented and output oriented
- quality is primarily the concern of production
- it mainly deal with the internal environment.

Some of the weaknesses of the 4 Ps are domain specific: ignoring human factor, lack of strategic dimensions, offensive orientation and lack of interactivity. Two weaknesses, however, seem to be common. The approaches have internal orientation and there is lack of personalization. It does not take into account the interactions or relationships especially between the customer and seller. Its basic nature is mass marketing, not personalization (Constantinides 2006, Lehtinen 2008). It is also difficult to imagine that any marketer would intentionally try to serve each customer only once (Möller 2006).

Relationship marketing supporters have been very critical as to the academic and practical value of the 4 P “paradigm”. Actually all authors reviewed by Constantinides (2006) propose new conceptual basis where interaction and communication are central.

## **2.2. The development of mix marketing**

Even with its subparameters 4 Ps have, however, been judged too simple for the realities of marketing. In order to develop mix researchers have presented varying lists in which the number and/or type of marketing mix parameters are different.

Already in 1964 Borden came up with 12 elements or parameters of mix, its special characteristics being the fact-finding and analysis related to market research. After Borden the amount of parameters remained four main parameters for a longer time (McCarty 1960). Thinking mainly

services marketing, Booms and Bitner (1981), however, suggested three extra elements to 4 P mix. They were people (participants), physical evidence (physical surroundings) and process. In 1991, Christopher et al. proposed replacing physical evidence with customer service in its broad sense. Yudelson (1999) collected different types and labels of parameters and he also suggested redefining of the 4 Ps in the way they appropriately relate to both customer and exchange interaction. A large and critical review of different mix solutions from the viewpoint of six marketing areas is included in Constantinides (2006).

Kotler (1990) proposed a new view of organisational performance and success based on relationships, whereby the marketing mix approach is not replaced, but is instead repositioned as the toolbox for understanding all the significant players in a company's environment. He outlined the importance of the relationship approach to stakeholders.

Lehtinen presented in his lecture notes since 1988 and Lehtinen and Järvelin articles (1994 a and b) a parameter list which includes, besides the aforementioned 7 Ps, the following parameters/parameter groups: cooperation agreements, networks, strategic alliances, positioning, market portfolio, counter purchases, supporting and aiding services, company image, green parameters, marketing information system, and the interrelationships of parameters (e.g. quality/price, product attributes/advertising).

One creative solution in developing marketing mix and its parameters is the adding of company-specific (unique, original) elements (lecture notes in 1985 and 1994 a by Lehtinen). Company-specific parameters often strengthen the existence of relationships and may solve many of the problems concerning mix marketing (Lehtinen and Niinimäki 2006). This kind of original elements can be based on company's unique location, person, new business idea, some environmental challenges etc. Company-specific elements can create long term customer value and promote long term customer relations. These elements can also promote repeat purchases and moderate customer contacts or promote customer quality. Often the adding of parameters means the widening of mix to the direction of relationships marketing.

Internet gives somehow new marketing elements which have close analogs in the offline world, and yet from another perspective they are revolutionary and worthy of a new characterization into the e-marketing mix (Kalyanam and McIntyre 2002). Kambil and Nunes (2000) have proposed to the marketing of music new important online marketing elements which are community building, original event programming, convenience and connectivity. There are differences between the physical marketing and the online marketing, but still online marketing need marketing mix parameters.

The following table of strengths and weaknesses of 4 Ps and 7 Ps describes in addition to its basic content also the problems that are rising when widening or reducing the number of mix elements.

**TABLE1. Strengths and weaknesses of the 4 Ps and 7 Ps ( cf. Möller 2006, Goi 2009)**

	<i>7 Ps</i>	<i>4 Ps</i>
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>More comprehensive More detailed Broader perspective Includes participants/ people, physical evidence and processes Referring to relationship and services</p>	<p>Simple and understandable Easy to memorize Good pedagogic tool Useful conceptual framework Ability to adapt to various problems More prescriptive</p>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<p>More complicated Additional elements are related to 4 Ps Controllability of the three new elements</p>	<p>Too simple Lacking participants, physical evidence and processes Static nature</p>

The general problems of the widening mix are especially seen in the weaknesses of 7 Ps. The examination can become too complicated, controllability can suffer and even needless elements can be incorporated. In any case, additional parameters are not easily comparable to the original logic of 4 Ps.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING APPROACHES

#### 3.1. Relationship marketing approaches and their challenges

The term relationship marketing and its basic logic were launched by Leonard Berry and Barbara Jackson in 1983. It was loosely based on in the earlier works of Levitt (1960), Bagozzi (1974, 1978), Mancneil (1978), Arndt (1979), Day and Wensley (1983) and Levitt (1983) who emphasized the importance of a consumer centric focus to marketing practices and the fact that long-term buyer- seller relationships are critical for firm longevity. It emphasizes the importance of customer service and quality and developing a series of parameters with consumers (Levitt 1983).

Gummesson (1997) offered a 30 relationships approach. His approach defined marketing as relationships, networks and interactions. He does not see that relationship marketing and marketing mix are mutually exclusive, but they support each other.

The concept relationship marketing was strongly influenced by reengineering theory, which was gaining currency at the same time. Organizations undergoing reengineering became structured according to complete tasks and processes rather than functions. In today's sophisticated consumer environment, an alternative model where the focus is on customers and relationships

is required. Relational quality or the quality of a relationship has a major impact on the long term business relationship with the customer. (Lehtinen and Järvelin 1995, Hui 2006)

The primary objective of relationship marketing is to increase the lifetime value of a customer and to develop long term relationships with stakeholders. Relationship marketing seems to be emerging a general and strategic umbrella philosophy with numerous relational variations, rather than a wholly unified concept strong enough to hold.

One of the main problem seems to be that the relationship marketing is understood differently by different scholars and practitioners (e.g. Winer 2001, Möller and Halinen 2000). This has made it more difficult to create any consistent theory and to reach the level of paradigm which was predicted by Lehtinen already 1996. Mattsson (1997) pointed out that if relationship marketing indicated a paradigmatic shift, it may not be clear wherefrom and whereto. Even today relationship marketing (or relationship management or CRM) is a strongly developing but not mature area of marketing.

Möller and Halinen (2000) found two distinct models of relationship marketing, which are managerial level network-based relationship marketing and market-based relationship marketing. One of the major problems of practical relationship marketing is to treat large number of customer with reasonable costs.

All in all, relationship marketing has some weaknesses especially in following circumstances (see Levitt 1983):

- relatively low value products or services
- consumer products
- generic commodities
- low switching costs
- clients preferring a single transaction to relationship
- no or low customer involvement in production.

Relationship marketing is more suitable in circumstances where products or services have higher value than in the case of lower value products or services.

### **3.2. CRM processes and marketing mix parameters**

According to Payne (2006) relationship marketing should be viewed as a strategic set of processes or activities that commences with a detailed review of an organization's strategy (strategic development process) and concludes with an improvement in business results and shareholder value (the performance assessment process). Competitive advantage stems from creation of value for the customer and for the company (the value creation process), and it is key to the success of any relationship. Relationship marketing activities for all companies will involve collecting and utilizing customer and other relevant data (the information management process) to build a superior

customer experience at each touch-point where the customer and supplier interact (the multi-channel integration process). There could also be other processes based on company's own strengths and interest.

The nature and content of all processes may vary between products, companies, lines of business and situations. Some other process (or operations or activity) may sometimes become so vital that the company wishes to develop it alongside the basic processes. (Lehtinen 2008 b)

Because the processes of relationship management developed by Payne (2006) are not well known they are here described in principal as the main elements of relationship management and in the connection of mix parameters so that the approaches are linked also in this respect (see more Payne 2006 and 2008).

### 3.2.1. Strategy development process and marketing mix parameters

In relationship marketing, its own strategy development strategies are moving towards relationship strategies (Rust and Thompson 2006). This approach has partly replaced the mix marketing approach ideas where marketing strategies based on short term operations stressing sales and promotions. Traditionally relationship marketing strategies pointed out long term customer value and long term customer relationships instead marketing mix based strategies pointed sales and promotions.

Strategy development process addresses what company wants to achieve, who are the customers and how should they be segmented. In strategy development process, determining the business strategy and finally customer strategy is essential (Payne 2006). Following ideas of the relationship approach, company takes into account what kind of value is provided for the customers, what are possible channels and methods of interacting with the customers, how to collect and use customer information and finally how to measure the performance assessment.

But marketing strategy needs to be linked to marketing mix parameters. By creating the marketing strategy company still needs decide product strategy, pricing strategy, distribution strategy and communication strategy. For example, without product development or pricing it is still impossible to create value for the customers and make customer strategy. The CRM strategy development process and strategy behind mix marketing approach are not separate even it in theory it sometimes seems to be so.

### 3.2.2. The value creation process and marketing mix parameters

"The value creation process consist of three key elements: determining what value the company can provide its customers with; determining the value the organization receives from its customers; and, by successfully managing this value exchange, maximizing the lifetime value of desirable customer segments." (Payne 2006)



Value creation is two way process. An important question is what company receives from its customers? One significant subquestion is how the customer takes part of product development and production process. The other subquestions are how the company can utilize the information it get from its customer and how the company can managed the maximizing of customer value?

In value creation process the company has some important product decisions to make. It has to decide how it full fills customer expectations. And then what are the ways of customer participation in product development and improvement? What kind of product a customer and a potential new customer need? Is there need for product customazion and how wide is the market offering for the customer segment? What is the quality of the product and is there need for service? Does the competition situation need product differentiation?

The product and its subparameters are not only company's marketing parameter which gives value to customers. Company has also to make price decisions, such as what is the price customer are willing to pay or are there any extra features customer are willing to pay more. The company have also to decide discount policy for its customer/customers, or does the company need some customer-based prices and how flexible is companys pricing policy or what kind of terms of payment policy company has for its customer.

Without communication parameter customer does not know companies offerings. In communication a company can create value listening customer expectations. Company have to make decisions how to contact customers, what is the way company build two way communication with the customer and decisions how the company improve its communication.

### 3.2.3. The multi-channel integration process and marketing mix parameter

Multi-channel integration process takes outputs of the business strategy and value creation processes and turns them into interactions with the customers (Payne 2008). The multi-channel integration process involves making decision about the most appropriate combination of channel participants and channel options trough which to interact with customer base. By this way the company ensures that the customer experiences are highly positive in those channels. In addition it finds out where the customer interacts with more than one channel and how to obtain and present a single unified view of the customer (Payne 2006). The customer becomes a co-producer in the exchange process.

One important question in value creation process and in multichannel integration process is the distribution channel for the product. Are the products easily available for the customers? What is the delivery time? How can the company ensure delivery for the product so that it creates value for the customers?

This process includes all forms communications. Multichannel integration process answers two question: what are the best ways to get connected with the customers and how make the best customer experience with affordable cost. (Payne 2008)

Multichannel integration process needs marketing mix channel decisions (sales force, stores, direct marketing, internet etc.) and communication decision so that customer knows about different channels where product or service is available. Pricing decisions not only depend on costs because company must take care that the pricing decisions are in the line with the channel type. Here we can clearly see that two major approaches are not separate from each other.

#### 3.2.4. The information management process and marketing mix parameters

Information management process is important for the other processes to promote customer value by giving important information concerning customer, environment, competitors etc.

This process is concerned with two key activities: the collection and collation of customer information from customer contact points and utilization of this information to construct complete and current customer profiles. The information can be used to better the quality of the customer experience, thus contributing to the value creation process. The process addresses two key questions: how should the company organize information on customers and how to use the information to improve marketing (Payne 2008). Customer feedback is also used to loop back to the marketing process for bettering the marketing process.

The linking of the relationship approach to product planning or product design to a great extent increases the gravity of marketing research and probing as well as test marketing that together bring about and follow through the whole innovation process. Customizing individual products, mass customization, and the overall usage of customer oriented high touch product parameter is important (Lehtinen 2011).

If a company has effective information management process, there will be relational marketing mix: relational product features and parameters, relational marketing communication parameters, relational pricing parameters, relational distribution solutions etc.

#### 3.2.5. The performance assessment process and marketing mix parameters

The purpose of performance assessment process is to ensure organization's aims. The process involves two key issues. First, how could organization increase profits and shareholder value and, second, how should organization set standards, develop metrics, measure its results and improve its performance. (Payne 2006)

Marketing mix approaches, focuses strongly on price, product performance and short term benefits, with limited service. Marketing mix approaches measure more market share, ROI, turnover etc. Relationship marketing is all about generating repeated sales and customer interactions,

thus focusing on bringing value to the customer, and assuring long term performance and service – all aspects of quality become major concerns. At the end the basic objectives of these two approaches are not exclusive in the means of performance measurement.

### **3.3. Development of relationship marketing**

There is still a definitional debate about relationship marketing. Some had argued that it is an old concept incorporated with existing schools of marketing thoughts and some see that it overlaps with so many marketing domains (services, channels, global and direct marketing) that it needs no separate identity (Seth and Parvatiyar 2002). Some see that it is its own paradigm (Grönroos 1994). However, it is not clear whether relationship marketing is a unified paradigm. Harker (1999) identified at least 26 separate definitions of the relationship marketing. Because of the debate about the relationship marketing approach it is possible only point some of the development challenges.

Relationship marketing is both the strategic approach and the practice of building relationships with existing customers and customer groups to promote customer loyalty (Payne 2006). That is one reason why it is difficult to build any whole picture of this approach.

One criticism concerning relationship marketing is that it is not suitable for relatively low value goods or services, consumer products and generic commodities. To solve those challenges of relationship marketing it is possible to use modern information technology for example social media. Social media gives to marketers a way to communicate with customers. It personalizes marketer's product or service and helps to spread continually the message.

Also one solution to make relationship marketing more appropriate is mass customization. The idea of mass customization is to create value to customers by creating customized products with production cost and price similar to mass-produced products. Mass customization is also a way of bringing customers to the part of production process. (Grönroos 2007)

It is naturally possible to try to find a new division of activities which is better or clearer than any already developed division. However, we believe that Payne's processes could be a suitable point of departure for this examination.

One new solution in developing relationship marketing is the adding company-specific parameters or processes (Lehtinen and Niinimäki 2006). These often strengthen the customer relationships and solve some of the challenges concerning relationship marketing (see e.g. Lehtinen and Järvelin 1995 ) These company-specific elements (we could call them also original or unique elements) can be built based on company's unique features, business models etc.

There are many kind of weaknesses in the present relationship marketing. One of the most serious weaknesses is the weakness in operationalization of relationship marketing. The combination of major approaches gives the possibility to operationalize the tactical level of relationship

approach by marketing mix (Lehtinen 2011). At the same time, combining can increase the CRM-type use of it-analyses of customer data, which better the usability of the combined approaches.

#### 4. COMBINING THE MAJOR APPROACHES OF MARKETING

Modern information technology, company-specific parameters and processes as well as mass customization can only partially solve the challenges facing marketing theory and practice. We still have some challenges which are not easy to solve by keeping relationship and marketing mix approaches separate (Lehtinen 2011).

The distinctions between relationship marketing and marketing mix are not clear, partly because successful relationship marketing is so complex and also because there are so many problematic and hard to measure factors that determine what is appropriate to a situation, whether relationship marketing, marketing mix, or something else (Jackson 1985). On the other hand, there are subparameters of communication especially public relations, which are clearly connected with relationship marketing. According to Cummesson (2007) relationship marketing represent a new marketing theory built upon relationships, interactions and networks. He pointed that mass marketing will continue but be less dominant.

Lehtinen (2007, 2008b and 2011) presented that relationship marketing and traditional mix marketing are not mutually exclusive and they are not necessarily in conflict with each other. Actually, the major marketing approaches have never been separate in practice (Lehtinen 2007). Lehtinen also considers that e.g. many weaknesses of marketing mix approaches can be replaced with the help of relationship marketing approaches and vice versa when combining approaches.

Lehtinen (2007) built two phased approaches of combining. The first principal phase of combining can be more or less unconscious. Combining basically happens because the major approaches are never fully separated and, on the other hand, the approaches are often used parallelly that probably leads to some kind of unconscious combining. Unconscious and unsystematic combining and the parallel use of the approaches may be normal ways to the companies to proceed when starting their combining work. Therefore Lehtinen sees that they describe the first principal phase of combining. We also believe that relationship marketing elements that can be added to the marketing mix approach would facilitate mix approaches to show the true value of mix or at least takes relational effects into account in mix.

According to Lehtinen (2007) in the second principal phase of combining two major approaches are combined more or less systematically, equally and consciously into a new single framework or frameworks (Lehtinen 2007). In Lehtinen's RELMIX framework (Figure1) marketing mix parameters and relationship marketing tactical processes (value creation process, performance assessment process, information management process, multi-channel integration process

etc.) are principally combined systematically, equally and consciously. Lehtinen (2007) did not include strategy development process into his RELMIX model because he tried to create the model of tactical level. However, he confessed the importance of strategic issues in many situations, even in combined approaches. By combining two approaches we can probably solve many challenges facing both theories. (Lehtinen 2011)

The RELMIX framework is matrix with the elements of the marketing mix approach on the x-axis and the processes of the relationship marketing (CRM) on the y-axis. The combining the elements of relationship and mix marketing approaches happens at the intersections of the parameters and the processes. (Lehtinen 2011)

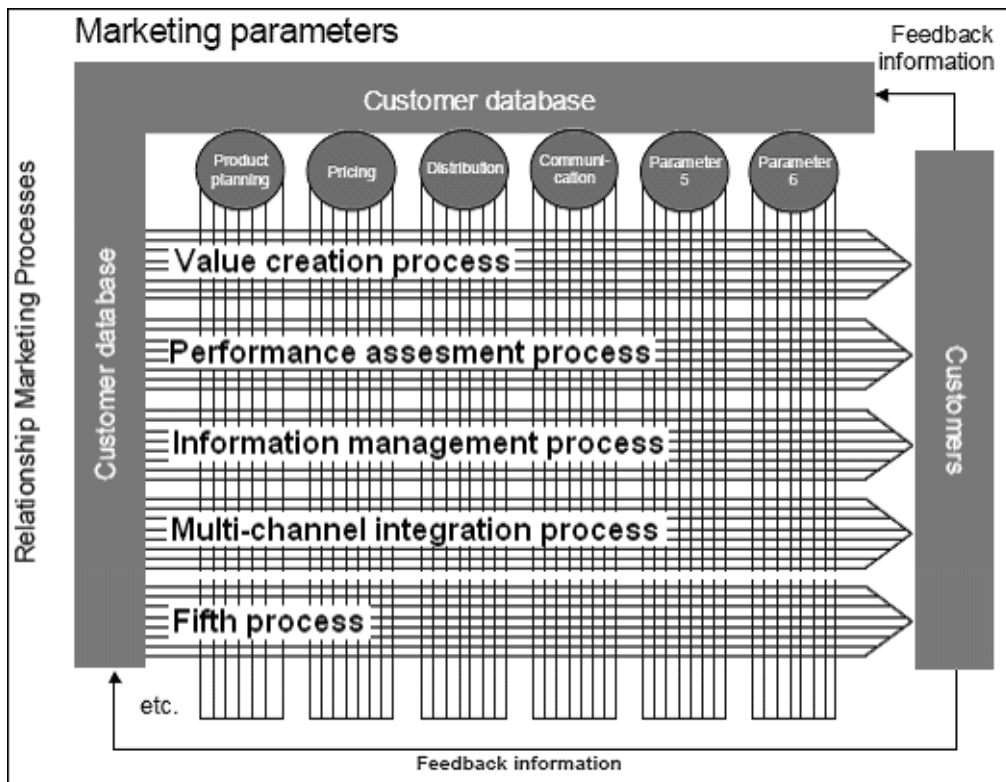


FIGURE 1. RELMIX framework for combining the mix parameters and relationship marketing processes. (Lehtinen 2008)

Lehtinen (2011) has made four empirical studies and utilized three secondary studies. The results of all seven empirical studies seemed to prove that there are evident gaps between the practice manifested by empirical results and current theories manifested by separate theories of marketing mix and relationship marketing. They also seemed to confirm the vision of his study that there is a lot of parallel use of both approaches, a significant use of approaches combined to same extend and at the same time a firm need for more combining the marketing approaches, which is realized in practice in various ways. In addition, the comments of the respondents after filling questionnaire strongly supported the continuation of discussion on combination the building of combined frameworks (Lehtinen 2011).

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In EMAC 2008 the main theme was: Have scholars really specialized marketing too much and narrowed it perspectives resulting in a failure to look at the bigger picture in theory and practice? The answer to this question seems to be affirmative in many respects. This study gives some visions to broaden the way of thinking about different marketing approaches.

The general purpose of this paper is to examine development possibilities of marketing theory and practice. The objective of the paper was to examine opportunities in improving the usability and use of the major approaches of marketing i.e. mix marketing and relationship marketing. When we started believing in the vitality of major theories of marketing, there are three principal possibilities to develop marketing theory and practice.

First principal possibility is to develop marketing mix approach. The approach has internal orientation, the lack of personalization, limited focus on environment and focus on single transactions. Many researchers have developed the original 4 Ps by adding more extra parameters. Sometimes these additional parameters can be company-based or/and relationship-based. However, still there are unsolved challenges.

The second principal possibility is to develop relationship marketing. One criticism concerning relationship marketing is that it is not suitable for relatively low value products, consumer products and generic commodities. Even using company based unique elements and/or modern social media can strengthen the relationship orientation of marketing. In any case, relationship marketing is still a strongly developing area in marketing. Especially it should be developed in tactical level.

The third principal development possibility is to combine fairly young relationship marketing approach and traditional marketing mix approach. Relationship marketing and mix marketing are not mutually exclusive and they are not necessarily in conflict with each other. Actually, Lehtinen (2011) presented also many other reasons that support combining the major approaches. It is

obvious that many weaknesses of marketing mix approach can be replaced with the help of relationship marketing approach and vice versa when combining approaches. The new and good solution could be of the type of Lehtinen's RELMIX framework where both approaches are combined and they are supporting each other.

The results proved clear separated theories of marketing. They also seemed to confirm the vision of Lehtinen's studies that there is a lot of parallel use of both approaches, a significant use of approaches combined to same extend and at the same time a firm need for more combining the marketing approaches.

The utilities of combining the major approaches could be developed synergicly. Especially, this is possible if we first utilize the opportunities to develop whichever or both of the major marketing approaches and then combine these developed approaches. It is a matter of taste if we call this the fourth possibility or not. In any case, we could and should proceed in theory building and practice utilizing all opportunities to improve the usability of the major marketing approaches.

Nowadays many trends and developments are changing marketing environment as well as marketing mix and relationships marketing. Here we only hint to "social marketing" which contains relational but also mix elements like advertizing and delivery.

We stated before that there are caps between practice and current theories. By nature marketing is usually considered as applied science that should be largely based on the acts and needs of marketing organisations (see however Lee and Greenley 2010) . Therefore, the caps between the real marketing life and theories should be reduced by empirical and theoretical research. The future of combining work can also have some stimulating power in marketing science generally. Because combining approaches represent a clearly new vision, we mainly examine combining in the following comments.

In the real life companies need a broad knowledge of different approaches of marketing and an ability to use them in an integrated manner (Möller and Halinen 2000, Lehtinen 2011). The resulting visions are not only theoretical approaches, but new approach helps also marketers to understand marketing more. This is important for all marketing decision makers. The ideas of this study can be used in companies' marketing decision making and after that we really know the value of combining these approaches. Anyway, company cannot in real life avoid some combining. But when combining, different approaches suit for different companies', situations, industries, competence of marketing people etc.

In the future research and practice the most important issues in developing the combining approaches will be the following questions:

1. What are the most essential elements in the approaches?
2. How could or should the essential elements be combined?

Finding answers to these questions requires a lot of creative effort. For example, the careful examination of the contents of the interactions of RELMIX (or a corresponding) framework is a demanding work to both the researchers and the marketing management of companies. Very important issues will be how combining work is done (positive witnesses) and how it should be done (normative advices).

The combined approaches give an opportunity to reduce the weakness of other approaches by using the strengths of other approach. The implementation of combined approaches takes time and work until new approaches are accepted among marketers.

If marketing mix approaches are developed by adding more parameters, the approach will be more complicate. The extra elements can be incorporated in 4 Ps and the three additional elements (7 Ps) and the new approach will be less controllable (Goi 2009). Relationship marketing is still a developing research area and there are e.g. plenty of definitions. However, the development work according to the style of Payne could be successful.

It is already stated that we should carefully consider whether there are applicable elements in other marketing approaches (Sheth et al. 1988, Möller 2007 a) that might be beneficial to the combination frameworks (Lehtinen 2011). This is not an easy work but e.g. it can be a useful way to proceed.

One of the latest great developments concerning relationship marketing is the service dominant logic. Vargo and Lusch (2004) anticipated that the emerging service centred dominant logic of marketing will have a substantial role in marketing though. It has some potential to replace the traditional goods centred paradigm. According to Vargo and Lusch (2004) the service centered dominant logic implies that value is defined by and co-created with the consumers rather than embedded in the products. Value for customers is created throughout the relationships with the customers, in interactions between the customer and service provider (Grönroos 2000).

When developing and applying models based on the service dominant logic, one must not forget the power of the concepts developed according to the goods-based models, where marketing mix variables are still important. On the other hand, when applied in goods contexts the power of service marketing concepts and models must not diluted. (Grönroos 2006, Stauss 2005).

Many remarkable researchers (e.g. Grönroos 1994, Gummesson 1995) have claimed, that a paradigm shift is occurring from mix marketing to relationship marketing. But it can occur in the long run so, that combined approaches could be the basis for the new paradigm.

Generally, we believe that the attempts to find the creative combination possibilities of former approaches would be a sensible way of theory building also in many other disciplines (Lehtinen 2012). For example, in many areas of business administration the same phenomenon is often tried to describe with the help of a fairly rational, often mechanical approach or, on the other hand, with help of a quite behavioral approach. In this kind of situations it might be useful



to combine compatible rational and behavioral approaches if there are no special preventive reasons. ■

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