
UOLEVI LEHTINEN

PASI MÄKINEN

Development possibilities of the major marketing approaches

The major approaches of marketing theory and practice evidently are marketing mix (sometimes identified with transaction marketing or parameter marketing) approach and relationship marketing/management approach. Many researchers claim that a paradigm shift is occurring from mix marketing toward relationship marketing. However 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. This means that mix approach can not disappear, though some researchers of relationship marketing have claimed, that marketing mix is not any more so useful.

The general purpose of this paper is to examine development possibilities of marketing theory and practice. The objective of the paper is to examine opportunities in improving the usability and use of the major approaches of marketing i.e. mix marketing and relationship marketing. We can describe only some development possibilities here.

The 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.

The second 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 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 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.

Lehtinen has made four empirical studies and utilized three secondary studies. The results of all seven empirical studies seemed to prove that there are evident caps between the practice manifested by empirical results and current

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

theories manifested by separate theories of marketing mix and relationship marketing. They also seemed to confirm the vision of his studies that there is a lot of parallel use of both approaches, a significant use of approaches combined to same extent and at the same time a firm need for more combining the marketing approaches, which is realized in practice in various ways.

We are not sure if we should speak also about the fourth possibility when the utilities of combining the major approaches would be developed synergically. 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.

The discussed paradigm shift between mix marketing and relationship marketing can occur in the long run so, that combining approaches could be the basis for the new paradigm. Generally, we believe that the attempts to find the creative combination possibilities of former theories would be a sensible way of theory building also in many other disciplines.