

## **To P or not P?**

It is amazing to think that the term 'marketing mix' was first coined way back in 1953; amazing because even today most people in marketing can still rattle off the original 4P's: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Much has changed in the last 60 years, and many have tried to add to and even change the 4P's with sound reasoning such as "the world is now totally different" and "4 are simply not enough".

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There are now articles and models on the 5P's, the 6 P's, the 7P's, the 13P's and even the 18P's. One has to wonder where it will all go? The fact is, while some P's make perfect sense, many belong within each of the original 4 and some are simply trying too hard, or in keeping with words that start with a P; pointless.

In no particular order the P's of the New Age Marketing Mix now include: Purpose, People, Planet, Point-of-View, Profit, Passion, Performance, Partnership, Promise, Pride, Planning, Process, Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Packaging, Physical-evidence, Personalization, Peer-to-Peer, Predictive-modeling, Permission, Personality, Presence, Proposition and Positioning. That's about 26P's and I am sure that if you tried you could add to the list...

The best 'new' addition has to be People - in terms of target audience. And who could put down the idea of Purpose? But one can easily argue that the likes of Purpose, Proposition, Promise, Positioning, Personalization and Peer-to-Peer are simply subsets of Promotion, and some are simply tautology. Equally, the likes of Packaging and Physical Evidence are simply subsets of Product; just as Profit is a subset or result of Price. There are the 'new age' P's that the online world has created such as Personalisation and Peer-to-Peer and then there are the P's that look like someone was simply trying to lengthen the list. Passion and Pride are important and beautiful attributes, but are they really elements of

the Marketing Mix; elements that can stand proudly (excuse the pun) next to the likes of Product, Price, Place, Promotion and People?

Interestingly, some have tried to kill the P's all together; arguing that Product should actually be Solutions, Price should be Value, Place should be Experience and Promotion should be Relationships. This makes sense; but Solutions, Value, Experience and Relationships are just not as neat as 4 P's and we know how us marketers like neat models, and clearly after 4 (or even 5 or 6 P's) things start to get messy.

So where does this leave us? Are the original 4P's still relevant and how many P's, if any could or should there be? The 4P's were invented to help determine the brand offer. Look again; they really are solid when thinking about a brand and hence they have survived.

In today's world of increased commoditization and sameness, differentiation and therefore Promotion is now more important than ever. Within Promotion, Purpose and Positioning (or in other words Proposition or Promise) would be my choice of focus. Notably, not all brands that we 'meet' have a clear or relevant Positioning, and many lack real Purpose.

## **Clive Evans**

### **The Strategy Department**

#### *Notes for the Editors*

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*Email: [Jen@thestratdept.com](mailto:Jen@thestratdept.com)*

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