Marketing Mix metamorphoses:
Between permanence and contingency.

Abstract

The marketing mix (MM) has been one of the most controversial topics of marketing, both as a theoretical framework and as a practical management tool. It reveals a wealth of ideas and an academic profusion that deserves to be better known. This article proposes to examine this fundamental concept in the light of the evolution of marketing. A temporal-based review of literature allows to attach its multiple forms to the developments of marketing and to the changes of the contexts in which they appeared. MM metamorphoses comply with those of marketing. This paper also enlightens the great resilience that the original formulation has shown over time. Nonetheless, the latest socio-economic trends seem to ask for another way of doing both marketing and the MM, leaving the door open for new formulas.

Key words: Marketing mix, 4Ps, evolution of the marketing mix, evolution of marketing

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Introduction

Few topics of the commercial theory have so intensively inspired as well as divided the marketing researchers as the MM. Mnemonic formulae have been frequent, patterned after the very popular "4Ps", including five, seven, thirteen, even fifteen Ps; four to seven Cs, three to five Vs, four to thirty Rs, four Ss, fours Es, four As, etc., as well as a wide variety of acronyms. The abundance of formulations attests to the lack of consensus on this subject. It is not surprising since the mix metaphor itself suggests the availability of a wide range of possible ingredients and different ways of mixing them. Some authors like Constantinides (2006) proposed a disciplinary classification of theses numerous initiatives and of the criticism of the 4Ps emanating from each area of marketing. According to us, such a wealth of ideas deserves to be considered in the light of the evolution of marketing. Are the countless conceptual forms used to characterize the MM the expression of the adaptations that marketing had to undergo over time? This is what this article is about. Indeed, it endeavours to identify the avatars of the concept of the MM throughout its evolution, which is itself anchored in the developments of marketing.

Marketing has developed from several approaches and schools, but it has undeniably been dominated and greatly impacted by managerial thinking. Marketing is also imbued with the spirit of the "consumptionist" society in which it has been built. Nevertheless, it got enriched throughout the encountered market situations, socio-economic landscapes, trends and technologies, but also thanks to the dissemination of both theoretical knowledges and practices, as well as through the contact with the movements that passed through it. Some of them are at opposite ends of the managerial paradigm. As it was already bearing the stigma of diverging approaches on which it was constructed, marketing has indeed known numerous transformations, so that, as Pierre Volle (2011) said, there is not one but several marketings, not one but several histories of marketing. There is no doubt that the role and place assigned to marketing within the company, as well as the techniques on which it relies, have significantly evolved over time. What about the MM?

The concept is one of the key pillars of the Marketing Management School of thought, which formally emerged in the 1950-1960s in the US and whose ideas had dominated the theory and practice of marketing for more than 30 years. Both marketing management and the MM would owe their success to the marketing concept "revolution", a new management practice in the American business community which was born in the 1950s. The concept advocated a change of philosophy and a customer orientation. Thereupon, profit acquisition was contingent upon the consumer's satisfaction, which was then at the center of the marketing approach.

While the marketing concept was gaining a hegemonic position in marketing discourse, the question of how to accomplish the managerialism of this concept was raised. The practical evidence of the MM, as "the" method of implementation of the marketing concept had become an evidence, as had market segmentation and targeting, two inseparable notions that were also born in the 1950s.

Let us recall that the MM, precisely, represents the interface between a company and its customers. It has been defined as the choice, the dosage, and the optimal combination of the means by which a company designs a satisfactory and profitable offering to its market target. Put simply, the MM had become the method of implementation of the marketing concept as defined in the 1960s. Thus, while the MM was born out of a very empirical initiative guided by the intent to provide the decision maker a tool to design his planning, the concept was then propelled to the heart of the marketing theory, although it seems that this had never been the intention. Besides, this resulted in a shift in marketing orientations. Thereupon, marketing adopted an explicitly managerial perspective, which replaced macromarketing as the focus of the discipline. The MM became the dominant paradigm that was supposed to explain all marketing phenomena, topics and issues. Thus, it has been at the core of marketing.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that the way of conceiving marketing has a significant influence on the conception and design of the MM. Confronted with the evolution of the marketing doctrine and the "fragmentation of mainstream", the MM had to question and re-invent itself. From this view point, this concept perfectly illustrates the resilience capacity of the discipline. The emergence of new conceptual forms went hand in hand with the fragmentation of marketing into several disciplinary fields as it was expanding. Our point of view is that it makes sense to re-situate this fundamental concept in a temporal approach, by linking the evolution of academic discourse on the MM to the evolution of the marketing thought. Indeed, the various MM models are best understood when placing the concept in the dynamic context of the evolution of marketing.

The intent of our paper is not historical. It is not didactic either, although it could allow to gain a better understanding of the MM, which is often presented in a simplistic way, thus eluding all the full wealth of this concept. Finally, it is important to note that this paper deals with the representations of the MM by academics over time and not with MM practices; representation which, without a doubt, has been shaped by the marketing discourse. Based on an extensive literature review on the MM, three periods are identified during which marketing underwent evolutions significant enough to impact

the MM. Thus, the MM's roots will be seen to fluctuate from a focus on the product, as a bearer of values, keeping a classical orientation of marketing, to a focus on the consumer, as a subject of experience, within the framework of a "market from" orientation, and then as a co-creator of value with the domination of a "meet" logic, respectively.

In an environment that is still modified, however, an acceleration of the changes is happening. Maybe the opening onto a new period? It will then be legitimate to question the future of the MM in such a framework.

First period: early mm in the context of a supply driven marketing (from the birth and formalization of the concept, in the mid 1950s, until the end of the 1980s)

Birth of the term and formalization of the concept

It is today indisputable that the earliest incarnations of the MM can be found prior the 1950s, in the writings of pioneers of marketing. Yet it was Borden who introduced the term "Marketing Mix" in 1953 (Wood, 1963). Although it is commonly agreed that a mix consists in a mixture of elements, however, the number and the nature of the components vary among precursor models: a mix with two categories for Albert Frey (1956), six categories for Kelley and Lazer (1958), then three categories in a revised edition (Lazer & Kelley 1962), and six controllable decisions area for Howard (1957).
The original model, probably the most comprehensive, was a list of 12 variables (product, price, branding, distribution, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, fact finding and analysis). Based on long-range planning, this model included a less well-known external side. Its genesis was exposed by Borden (1964) in a late and retrospective publication in which he claimed the concept's authorship.

The MM has nonetheless remained essentially associated with McCarthy's (1960), quadrilogy –Product, Price, Place and Promotion– corresponding to four generic marketing exchange functions. This model is the only one that has survived. As already mentioned its supremacy essentially corresponds to the rise and dominance of the school of marketing management, with its emphases on the 4Ps. This school, originally limited to manufacturers, was in full swing in the 1960s. The MM inevitably carries its logic and complies with its vision of marketing which, we recall, was then essentially envisioned as a way to stimulate demand and facilitate exchanges; at that time, exchange was seen rather from a "transactional perspective".

Yet, the 4P MM also unquestionably marries a period, a geographical and a socioeconomic context (i.e., the US during the Postwar Prosperity), as well as a field (i.e., consumer marketing). It matches a way of life (built around mass consumption), to which the access was facilitated by an extensive distribution and low prices resulting from economies of scale; the whole being encouraged by a persuasive communication. In addition, it fell within an approach (a "marketing to" approach) and within a conception of the company (sovereign) and of its consumer (passive), as well as of the relationships that bind them together (an unbalanced competitive mode for the benefit of the seller).

Finally, some opponents may have lost sight that, beyond the MM model, what is called the "MM Management paradigm" goes far beyond the emblematic MM (whose diffusion took place around its 4P version). It is also both a coherent approach and a set of tools such as segmentation, targeting and positioning (a notion that was born in the 1980s). Anyway, the hegemony of the 4Ps was such that the numerous complementary or alternative MM proposals, indeed, were built upon McCarthy's model, thus neglecting certain qualities of Borden's initial canvas. It was all the more unfortunate that the MM had become the method of implementation of the marketing concept as defined in the 1960s.

As a price for its success, the 4Ps have been subject to sometimes strong criticisms.

First reconsiderations of the 4P MM

During the long interval between its genesis and the end of the 1980s, the 4P MM globally adhered to a traditional perspective of marketing, relying on a supply driven orientation. Nonetheless, it was widely put into question as it faced a series of evolutions. A range of events alternately shook both marketing and the MM. In particular, we note the formation of new independent research movements and the borrowings from distinct fields of study such as sociology and psychology in the 1960s; major reflections on exchange as the heart of marketing and on strategic thinking and planning in the 1970s; the questioning of the usual practice of marketing, in favour of a larger consideration of the affective dimension of consumption, the questioning of planning in the 1980s; as well as many calls from certain researchers for a greater emphasis on marketing theory.

It should also be recalled that the 1980s were marked by a questioning of the cognitivist paradigm, hence contributing to disturb certain of its theoretical frameworks. However, it was probably the hegemony of marketing management which amplified this questioning. A double expansion of marketing, both organizational and within the company, inevitably led to major reflections on marketing and on the MM.

Insufficiencies of the 4Ps in the face of the expansion of marketing within the company

Given that Borden's original MM got forgotten, the diffusion of marketing was organized around the 4P paradigm. During this period, the role of marketing evolved so as to include key decisions such as market targeting, product positioning, branding, product innovation, and new business development. In this new context, some authors considered that McCarthy's taxonomy reveals some inaccuracies such as the absence of explicit references to the target market (Chollet 1976), the absence of marketing research (Traynor 1985) or a rather imprecise connection to the strategy (O'Shaughnessy 1984) and to other levels of decision-making (Swiners 1982). Its shortcomings, both external and strategic were denounced by Ohmae (1982) for whom the mix contains no determinant factor, and by Kotler (1986) who proposed two additional Ps (Power and Public Relations) within the "megamarketing" framework. However, maybe many of these criticisms may have originated in the arbitrary separation of the MM from other related concepts such as segmentation, targeting and positioning, but also from a coherent sequence (i.e., Analysis, Planning and Control). This is the view of Möller (2006). According to him, it is both flawed and unfruitful to examine and interpret the MM detached from its wider theoretical context, the Managerial School of Marketing.

Internal shortcomings were highlighted as well, partly explained by marketing management's hegemon, that is to say the appropriation by marketing of areas which were not previously integrated into it. The inclusion under the MM's umbrella of a certain number of elements led to oppose researchers. For example, historically, "Promotion" (the fourth P) corresponds to advertising, and more generally to commercial communication, which existed before marketing. Promotion was then absorbed by marketing to become one of the elements of the MM. However, for a long time, advertisers had progressively turned towards image shaping by relying, over time, on more diversified techniques. Thus, the term Promotion itself, very oriented towards persuasion, opposed researchers. Chollet (1976) proposed to rather refer to it as the "means of pressure". In the end, consensus was found around the term "Communication". But the hybrid nature of the fourth P, itself subdivided in heterogeneous categories as sales promotion, advertising or personal selling, raised many problems (for a review see for example, Van Waterschoot & Van den Bulte 1992). Besides, not all authors agreed on the place of certain elements within the mix such as the salesforce (Zeyl & Brouard 1986), but also regarding where to position public relations (Dewitt 1974; Kotler 1986; Mindak & Fine 1981) or customer service (Lambert & Harrington 1989; Sterling & Lambert 1987), elements that were not previously included within the MM.

Insufficiencies of the 4Ps originating from marketing's organizational expansion

The 1970/80s were also marked by the broadening of marketing and by its integration of social exchange principles, stimulating major debates. Marketing's extension outside of the purely commercial area inevitably made the MM confront new challenges. As social, ecological and ethical concerns were spreading through society, there was a need to translate and apply the mix to these different contexts. There was also a need to adapt the model to a non-profit context and to address for instance the challenge of a cause-related marketing (see, e.g. Varadarajan & Menon 1988; Yudelson 1988).

In the commercial area, the classical marketing also did not match the complexity and specificities of certain fields such as industrial markets. While some authors defended that consumer marketing and industrial marketing are not fundamentally different, singularities started to get identified in the 1970s. In this field, perennial and long term relationship, cooperation, mutual trust, interaction and network are essential data. A European research initiative, known as the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing [IMP] Group, developed an alternative approach to mainstream marketing, especially around the work of Hakansson. This explains why there have been so few propositions of MM models (e.g., Judd 1987, who added a fifth P for "People" to show the crucial role of employees).

In the marketing of services as well, whose interest has grown simultaneously in the US and Europe, authors made more or less severe criticism of the 4Ps, depending on their conception of marketing and services. The unique nature of services (i.e., intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability) required a special focus on certain elements such as the crucial role of people in the deliverance process, the importance of environmental factors, the interaction and quality issues, but also the service quality which was becoming a pivotal concern. At that time, some service marketing scholars supported a break free from product marketing.

To take account of the specificities of services, Boom & Bitner (1981) extended the original framework to 7Ps, including Participants, Physical evidence and Process. Validated by several authors, this model was probably the most famous in this field. Many other less generalist taxonomies, however, were proposed to adapt to the specific features of fields such as hospitality, tourism or the distributional industry, another sector that would gain a foothold in the mid-1990s.

While the 4P framework continued to prevail in the US, in opposition to the limits of the tools of marketing management, more relational approaches were developed, especially around the work of the American Berry, of the

French authors Eiglier and Langeard, but also around less well-known initiatives originating from northern Europe and from Canada, with a focus on interactions (in particular Grönroos and Gummesson from the Nordic School of Services). In fact, as Baker (2016a) explained, the Nordic School perspective saw the marketing of services as an integral element of overall management. The latter approach, that is one of the most radical challenging of the mix paradigm, would later achieve a certain success and would participate to the hegemony of a service marketing.

The review that we just performed highlighted the regular revisions and updates that the MM underwent. The questioning was mainly waged on two fronts: services and industrial marketing; two areas where relationships and interaction are much-needed. This challenging was also mainly European. However, twenty-five years after their birth, the 4Ps still remained deeply rooted in marketing's "genes", to such an extent that, in 1985, reviewing its official definition, the American Marketing Association (AMA) yet chose to do it around the 4Ps:

> "Marketing is planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, distribution of ideas, goods, and services so as to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives" (in Gundlach & Wilkie 2010, p.89).

In doing so, the AMA seemed to "hallow" the managerial school of marketing and the MM as the essence of marketing. Yet, despite its popularity at that time, according to certain authors, the 4P paradigm might have become inadequate for describing the breadth of marketing applications in the 1980s and beyond (Bruner 1988; 1989). Worse, in the words of Kent (1986, p.145), the 4Ps would have become "an article of faith". At the end of the 1980s, after a quarter of a century of literature, academic reflection on the MM was therefore in full swing and the "paradigm battle" was on.

Second period of reformation of the mm in the face of a market orientation: from a marketing "to" to a marketing "from" (early 1990s – mid 2000s)

The 1990s faced major changes in the business environment, particularly significant technological transformations at the dawn of the digital age, a changing consumer landscape, as well as the rise of new concepts and new approaches. Revisions of the MM commensurate with the magnitude of the impending upheavals could then be expected, propelled in particular by market orientation, a new approach which has probably been marketing's largest and most diffuse approach. Different conceptualizations were proposed for this approach (for a review, see for example Lambin 2007b). Market orientation is resolutely customer focused, but not only. Indeed, it takes into account other market actors such as competitors and other key market stakeholders.

The 1990s marked an important turning point in the literature. A particularly academically prolific period started, revealing a paradox. Marketing was built theoretically around a logic of needs, in response to an overly business-oriented perspective. It won its spurs by putting the consumer in the center of business and by giving a determinant role to his satisfaction. However, it proved to be far too centered on the company. The resolution of this paradox encouraged the changeover from a marketing centered on the product, as a bearer of values, to an approach that is more oriented towards the consumer, his perception, and his experience. It also encouraged the transition from an extensive approach to a more intensive one, which gives a privileged place to relationship and to a better adaptation of the offering to customer expectations.

Sometimes described as a transition to the postmodern era, this period also witnessed a series of turbulence and questioning, as well as a deep discomfort, given the unpredictability of consumers' behaviour. Consequently, new challenges were arising for "mainstream marketing", and new reformulations for the MM, accompanied by new divisions and oppositions. The latter, indeed, was reproached for having many weaknesses such as a product orientation instead of a customer focus, a one way orientation and no interactivity nor personalized communication, an offensive rather than a collaborative character, etc. (For a review, see e.g., Constantinides 2006). Certain researchers like Anderson and Taylor (1995), however, relativized these criticisms, considering that the 4P paradigm was time-tested.

The literature aroused by the MM during this period is extremely abundant. This wealth and diversity went together with the (r)evolutions to which marketing seemed to be confronted. Then, what were the substantial MM metamorphosis in this second period?

The necessity to conceive the MM from the customer

Firstly, putting the customer at the heart of the approach implied conceiving a MM based on customer value standards and perceptions. This determination can be identified in several models (e.g., Bennett 1997; Lauterborn's, 1990; Yudelson 1999). Lauterborn's 4Cs (Consumer, Cost, Convenience and Communication) are one of the best known of these initiatives. Yudelson's four new Ps (Performance, Penalty, Perception, and Process) appropriately relate to both the

customer and the exchange interaction as part of a total quality-driven relationship. Furthermore, the addition of a fifth P ("Partner') aimed at showing that the customer is a partner involved in the value-creating exchange activity.

Instead of Price, most of these new taxonomies comply with the broader notion of Costs or Penalties, which are also perceived, an initiative that was already visible in Bruner's (1988) 4Cs (Concept, Cost, Channel and Communication). Instead of insisting on the product's distribution, a broader definition addresses all aspects of the buying experience and encourages multi-channel marketing.

As far as Communication is concerned, while it still remained too constricted into influence and persuasion and too scattered into multiple very different elements, an imperative necessity to connect to consumers (and to other publics) with a unified and coherent message arose, leading to the emergence of an integrated approach, supported by the new Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) concept. For their part, Van Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992), focused on establishing a clear distinction between sales promotion and communication by adding a promotional mix to the basic mix. Besides, in the 1990s, the integration of public relations (PR) into marketing was far from consensual (Miller & Rose 1994).

Given its crucial role in creating value, the place given to the brand within the MM was also questioned. Its scope extended beyond the product, and its management evolved. Melewar and Saunders (2000) added the brand as an eighth P ("Publications") to the 7P taxonomy of services marketing. Tomasella's (2002) classification granted it the central place. His extended MM articulates seven variables around brand positioning (4Ps plus Co-brandind, Sensory Identity and Innovation). In addition, globalization as well as audience diversification exacerbated the shift from the brand product to a more institutional branding. This integrated approach of marketing at an institutional level was defended by Balmer (1998, 2001, 2003), who relied on a corporate MM structured in 11Ps. Reflections on the concept of corporate reputation that accompanied his taxonomy presented a growing academic interest. Indeed, the audience was expanded to diverse markets and stakeholders which companies had understood the importance of creating links with. This partly explains the breakthrough of relationship marketing and the willingness to include it into the MM.

Integrating relationship and loyalty into the MM

The MM was reproached for overemphasizing customer acquisition, and therefore a rather transactional and short-term perspective. In the meantime, many relational approaches developed, some of them advocating the widespread use of symbiotic marketing. Thus, a marketing called "relational" was opposed to the so-called transactional marketing, "a rhetorical label invented in the 'paradigm battle' of the 1990s" (Möller, 2006).

Beyond the many debates it has generated on its nature, as well as on its emergence and on its paradigmatic status, in the 1990s, relationship marketing became the dominant theme almost everywhere. Furthermore, having emerged in parallel, approaches founded on other modes than classical marketing participated more actively to the advent of an orientation focused on the wholeness of relationship. In such a vision of marketing, the company holds a less sovereign place, as illustrated by the concept of "part-time marketer" (Gummesson 1991). How did this rise of relationship affect the MM?

In the industrial field, cradle of relational and interactive approaches, few initiatives validated the classical conceptual framework (e.g., Judd, 2003, who refined his 5P model). According to Anderson et al. (1999), each P of the 4P model would deserve to be reevaluated in the light of a context where relationship and networks management occupy a determinant place.

In the services area, marketing evolved. Certain authors like Collier (1991) continued to validate the classical 4P model in its version extended to 7Ps; or 5Ps for Heuvel (1993) who gauged the impact of the seller's behavior on both the relational and the overall satisfaction. For their part, Ellis and Mosher (1993) extended the 4Ps to 6Ps, including "People" and "Presentation" to assist professional service firms. Bitner (1991) emphasized the importance of service quality. Finally, Lovelock and Wright (1999) introduced "Productivity/quality" as a eighth P for their model of integrated service management. The customer/service provider interaction and its resulting relationship are indeed decisive factors of the perception of the service quality.

Furthermore, at that time, after the industrialization phase of the 70s and 80s, a new approach, carried out by more interactive marketing schools, was taking shape in services: a customer-focused service mindset, whose practical implications regarding the conception and application of the MM could be anticipated (Beaven & Scotti 1990). According to Gadrey (1992), the ultimate step in developing a service activity would be to "render service" by finding complex and individualized solutions to the client's problems. Service is therefore seen as a form of relationship, rather than a category of market offerings. For proponents of these approaches, marketing was moving towards a new paradigm, in which the 4Ps had become outdated (e.g., Grönroos 1994; Gummesson 1994). However, the problem of operationalizing relationship marketing led them to consider alternatives such as the 30Rs proposed by Gummesson's (1994).

What about the consumer MM in this new context? As expected, relational approaches, originally developed in industry and then in services, entered the consumer marketing with more vigour. Goldsmith (1999, p. 179) stated that "services marketing emphasis on customer satisfaction and long-term relationships with customers have influenced goods marketers to think differently about their businesses and their customers". By the way, according to the author, managers of all types of businesses should be encouraged to think about the 7Ps. Anyway, relationships gradually established themselves as a more significant element to foster loyalty, leading both manufacturers and distributors to design their MM in a more relational perspective.

The formers challenged their mix in two ways. In the mid-1990s, the rise in distributors' marketing skills exacerbated conflicts between industry and commerce. Manufacturers tried to find a positive solution through new forms of partnership-based relationships (such as Trade Marketing or Category Management). This required for companies to integrate the distributor's constraints, at the design phase of their own MM. At the same time, their estrangement with their customers and the resulting retention issues led manufacturers to rethink loyalty in a more relational way, while it had been structured, up to that point, around the product and the transaction (see, e.g., Moulins 1998). Already aware of the relational weaknesses of the 4Ps, Rozenberg and Czepiel (1984) had proposed to formulate a separate MM for existing customers, with the aim of maximizing customer retention. This perspective naturally evolved towards an emphasis on relationship, considering customer value more widely, such as through the capitalization on the established relationship. Vavra's (1993) concept of «aftermarketing» illustrates this orientation. However, some authors remained attached to the more traditional conceptual framework, such as Rafiq and Pervaiz (1995), who demonstrated that the 7Ps performed in the field of goods as well as in the field of services.

Concerning distributors, they were not spared from loyalty issues. In this field as well, a shift was observed from traditional merchandising (which focuses on MM elements) toward more integrated approaches and active customer management, with more emphasis on customer relationships (Mulhern 1997).

Successively, industrial marketing, and then services marketing, have made it possible to better understand the interactions between the company and the consumer, generating new practices and new fields of reflection, such as Quality Management and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Collaborative and interactive approaches developed also into consumer marketing, in particular through the rise of the internet and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). They marked the adoption of one-to-one marketing practices and the shift from a segmentation-based approach to a more personalized approach of customer, as well as the search for a better customer experience. These were as many challenges that the MM was about to take up.

Meeting the challenge of the internet revolution and of digitalization: adaptation, personalization, customization of the MM, e-MM and experiential MM.

In the 90s, customer satisfaction had become one of the keystones of marketing; a problem all the more serious that it is linked with customer retention. At the same time, the rise of the internet and digital technologies opened up new possibilities in terms of communication, of distribution, and more broadly of interaction, allowing to meet more finely customer expectations. This revolutionized the marketing landscape.

A short period called "dot-com boom" (1995-2000), gave rise to much reflection. During their short existence, the virtual companies (namely e-tailers or dot.com retailers), that were created during this period, developed and introduced new internet based marketing techniques at a rapid pace, creating a new world for marketing. Originally developed in an e-distribution context, these techniques were widely used by other organizations, both in BtoC (Business to Consumer) and BtoB (Business to Business) spaces, leading to the advent of a specific digital marketing (also referred to as e-marketing or internet marketing). The issue of an e-MM was inevitably raised, along with, the question of the validity of the 4P model for effectively dealing with these new challenges.

Indeed, as Gandolfo (2009) noted, the original version of the MM showed major limitations particularly in this digital context. The poor categorization of e-marketing techniques, the lack of understanding of interrelationships, the lack of a holistic view, and the lack of a clear definition of e-marketing aggravated this problem. In addition, as Kalyanam and McIntyre (2002) rightly pointed out, depending on the area of interest, the marketing community had developed a very selective view of e-marketing techniques. To web developers and technology integrators e-marketing was mainly about building web sites. To the advertising industry it was about the impact of internet advertising on generating web traffic and brand building. To the CRM community, internet was about personalization and to auction oriented sites it was about word of mouth and community building. Finally, as Kalyanam and McIntyre (2002) also noted, the internet community had also introduced new vocabulary such as the terms "viral marketing", "data mining", "personalization", "mass customization", "one-to-one marketing", etc. However, some of them were sometimes used, in one way or another, to refer to the same concept, adding difficulty.

What about the MM in this new digitalized context? Was digitalization compatible with the traditional MM? Once again, the authors' position oscillated between rejection and adaptation of the 4Ps. If, for authors like Schultz (2001), marketers had to "bid farewell to the 4Ps", for other like Siegel (2005), just as they had an enduring place offline, the importance of the 4Ps was equally compelling online. Thus, once again, the 4Ps mobilized and divided the academic world, which proposed either adaptations or more radical solutions.

Some authors didn't question the model but rather studied how digitalization changed the way each of its elements was approached. Indeed, in a digitalized environment, the traditional MM in 4 or 7Ps had to fulfil new roles and many differences appeared between physical and online marketing (Aldrige et al. 1997; Allen et al. 2001; Harridge-March 2004; Peattie et al. 1997). The advent of the Internet and wireless communications technologies offered a different perspective on the 4Ps (O'Connor et al. 1997). Bhat and Emdad (2001) showed how the virtual value chain transforms the traditional 4Ps by giving them new dimensions. According to them, in e-commerce, success will depend on how the physical value chain and the virtual value chain activities are matched and integrated.

In order to take up the e-marketing challenges, some authors supported totally or partially renewed approaches of the MM. For a more interactive digital approach, Constantinides (2002) proposed the 4S web-MM (Scope, Site, Synergy and System) as a new approach and conceptual basis for online marketing. Dennis et al. (2005) presented a new version of the marketing retail and e□retail mixes, distilled into a framework with seven mnemonic Cs: Convenience, Customer value and benefit, Cost to the customer, Computing and category management, Customer franchise, Customer care and service and Communication and customer relationships.

Instead of rejecting the 4Ps altogether, some authors rather considered hybrid versions, adding new items to the traditional model. Kalyanam et al. (2002) characterized the e-MM using a $4Ps+P^2C^2S^2$ acronym. In other words, they kept the original 4Ps and then added Personalization and Privacy, Customer service and Community, and Security and Site design. Robins (2000) proposed to work out eight personal e-benefits for buyers: Inexpensive, Interactive, Involving, Information-rich, Instantaneous, Intimate, Individual, and Intelligent. As with the traditional mix, these 8Is offered marketers a mental checklist, a useful guide in their continuing efforts to refine and advance e-marketing practices. Yet, unlike the traditional mix, the e-mix focused on individuals. According to Chaffey and Smith (2001), without supplanting the 7Ps, Peppers and Rogers' 5Is (Identification, Individualisation, Interaction, Integration and Integrity, 1997) could complete the model.

One of the the salient features of e-marketing is that it is performed with and around information through a virtual value chain. Indeed, database marketing made it possible to go beyond traditional segmentations, by offering more individualized approaches such as personalization and customization. The 1990s marked the beginning of an economics of variety, carried by the concepts of delayed differentiation or mass customization (Pine 1993), and of one to one marketing (Peppers and Rogers 1993). This created new challenges for the MM. Initiated in a "mass context", the latter had to evolve to adapt to this economics of variety.

The trend towards personalization, which became one of the key initiatives of the time, was already visible through a phenomenon called "servitization" that spread in the late 80s. Personalization, which can be achieved by adding services to a product offering, was reflected in the MM classifications of some authors from the services sector (Berry 1990; McDonald and Payne 1996) or not (Doyle 1994; Vignali and Davies 1994). By capturing customer specific information, the internet and World Wide Web offered the opportunity to customize products and services. Considering that it allows a unique positioning strategy, Goldsmith (1999) integrated Personalization as the 8th P of his model, alongside Product, Price, Promotion, Place, Personnel, Physical assets, and Procedures. According to Kalyanam et al. (2002), mentioned above, personalization transcends all aspects of e-marketing.

Instead, Logman (1997) considered customization, which offers customers the possibility to customize the products themselves, and which necessarily implies customers' participation in product design. From his point of view, five different instruments of the MM (product, purchase price, communication, distribution and logistics, and after-sales support and costs) can be customized. The author stated that customization requires a one to one relationship, a more individualized management of commercial and non-commercial contacts, and a personalization of interactions. It is why it goes far beyond the framework of product differentiation. For Patterson and Ward (2000), who are proponents of a relationship management approach (instead of a relationship marketing) in the services field, the classical 4Ps must give way to a CRM that they conceptualized in a new 4C quadrilogy (Communication, Customization, Collaboration and Clairvoyance).

Finally, the customers' active participation in the co-design process logically provided food for thoughts on the customer's experience, now considered through a managerial perspective, through the emerging idea of Customer Experience Management (CEM). For authors as Pine and Gilmore (1998), value it is not created within the company, it is essentially experiential. Consumption is then seen as a holistic and more emotional experience for the customer.

Marketing practices had to evolve towards a re-enchantment of the customer, thanks to an experiential offering that supplants products, and services: the experiential offer. The experiential MM, proposed by Schmitt (1999a, 1999b), is no longer exclusively focused on products' functional attributes; it is based on a set of action levers or intentional stimuli (called «experience providers») that are set up by the company to generate the experience, through a more or less active customer participation.

It is difficult to escape a certain prolixity in such a prolific period. Yet, this fertility led to rather mitigated points of view regarding the real changes that had occurred. Most of the initiatives presented seem, after all, still too close to a supplier's perspective, in the BtoC field at the very least. The paradigm shift that brought them out was far from being unanimously accepted. Möller (2006) proposed a rereading of the 4Ps, estimating that many authors were misreading the mix and therefore drawing misleading conclusions about it. Baker (2000) considered the 4P model as a useful, simplifying device to enable marketing managers to impose some structure and direction on the tasks they must perform. Finally, according to Constantinides (2006), several studies confirmed that the 4P MM had remained the trusted conceptual platform of practitioners dealing with tactical/operational marketing issues.

Ultimately, considering that industrial marketing obtained an independent status and that its preoccupations are far from the 4Ps, one can say that the strongest 4Ps opponents emanated from the supporters of the relationship and services fields. Besides, Van Waterchoot and Foscht (2010) explained that services marketing had evolved from an autonomous subfield of marketing into an aspiring dominant approach in contemporary mainstream marketing that was supposedly applicable to any kind of organization. This tentative to place the service perspective as the new core of marketing received a boost with the publication by the Americans Vargo and Lusch (2004) of an article entitled "Evolving to a new dominant logic of marketing". In the process, in 2004 the AMA changed its definition of marketing, opening a new period. Indeed, the mid-2000s seem to have paved the way for some perspective shifts with, maybe, more significant consequences on the MM.

Third period of reconsideration of the mm around value co-creation: from marketing "from" to marketing "with" (from the mid-2000s onwards)

This third period has seen an acceleration of the integration movement, a refinement of the concepts, and a new rise of relationship, amplified by the 2008 crisis and new advances in ICT. This led to more interaction and to an increased customer participation in value creation, opening up new reflections on understanding and delivering value to the customer and, as a consequence, on the MM. These changes were significant enough that, in 2004, the AMA attempted to incorporate them into a new revision of the definition of marketing, which became:

> "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to the customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders" (in Gundlach & Wilkie 2010, p.90).

According to some authors, this definition reflects a still narrow conception of marketing, particularly due to its focus on marketing management at the expense of alternative perspectives. Nevertheless, the consequences of this revision on marketing and its repercussions on the MM can already be predicted. Indeed, this new definition marks a second turning point in the way of thinking the marketing. How has the MM adapted to these new developments?

MM, value creation and co-creation

While they structured the previous definition, exchange and the 4Ps have now disappeared, giving way to value creation. It therefore seemed necessary to express this in the MM. As a result, Kumar's (2007) 3Vs model is mixed around 3 values: consumer value (Who to serve?), value proposition (What to offer?), value networks (How to offer?). Value is also found in the SIVA model (Solution, Information, Value and Access) proposed by Dev & Shultz (2005a, 2005b).

In the marketing terminology, product delivery has given way to value proposition: the company no longer designs an offering; it builds a value proposition, communicates its value and delivers it to the customer. However, the notion of delivery became problematic. In an increasingly customer-centric period, less emphasis was placed on the exchanged item, for the benefit of a growing interest in the creation process. The «towards» logic, guided by a focus on the product, in which the MM is included, was challenged in favor of two other logics which are the basis of a service-centered perspective: a «for» logic, based on service and guided by skills, and a «with» logic, focused on interactivity and relationships. The 2000s were indeed associated with a greater focus on the service concept, with no «s», indicating the process of doing something for and with someone. However, this logic was not identified in the same way depending on the authors.

For certain authors, the logic of service seems to be more related to the solution: "selling solutions rather than products, i.e. 'a unique combination of products and services components' that could solve a customer's problem" (Lambin et al. 2007a, p.129). This conception is the basis of some mix frameworks such as the SIVA model mentioned above. According to Lambin, the solution approach is an "outside-in" view of the market which is fully customer-centric and provides a different way of looking at the elements of the MM (Lambin 2007b). While reinterpreting the 4Ps, the author added a fifth variable, surprisingly entitled "Selling", which would enclose the full importance given to the dialogue with the consumer and to the negotiation process.

We said this is surprising because, nowadays, the term "sale" very poorly reflects the acceptance contained in the term "dialogue". Indeed, the latter falls within a real perspective shift where the consumer appears to be much more active and co-creator of value. The dialogue and the collaborative approach that come with it ("with" logic) have been described as "meet" logic. These co-creative approaches have been crystallized in new interactive approaches of marketing, especially in the service logic. Initiated by Vargo and Lusch (2004), and advocated by the Nordic School, with some divergences, this logic constitutes the fulcrum of an alternative theoretical framework to the mainstream MM perspective. Their promoters advocate a shift from a goods-dominant logic to a service-dominant logic. However, this assertion has recently been challenged by Tadajewsky and Jones (2020).

Anyway, in accordance with a service logic, value is no longer contained solely in the goods and services, nor only in consumer's perception. It is not created or delivered by the company but emerges during the use, in the very process of value creation by the consumer. From a passive marketing target, to whom a value offering is delivered thanks to a MM cleverly orchestrated by the company, the consumer now plays the key role, to the extent of considering that, without him, there can only be, at most, a value potential. Value creation is viewed from a value-in-use rather than a value-in-exchange perspective. We are at the other end of the spectrum from the traditional linear approach to marketing, which had to consider giving way to a more interactive approach and to co-creation. The latter makes outdated both the separation between supplier and customer, and the traditional MM concept that is attached to it. Indeed, as linearity has been replaced by circularity, it is conceivable that, inevitably, the MM has had difficulty finding its place.

While Grönroos (2006), from the Nordic school, strongly condemns the 4P paradigm, for Vargo and Lusch (2004), this reorientation would not require to abandon most of the traditional core concepts such as the MM, but it would rather complement these concepts. Similarly, for Hakansson and Waluszewski's (2005), who defended an alternative approach based on networks, interactions and relationships, the 4Ps could still be a useful starting point in many analyses. However, the model should then be reframed, including how the 4Ps are conceptualized. To this end, they have reinterpreted the 4Ps by focusing on a more customer-oriented approach, the interaction with customers, value creation and satisfaction.

The need to blend MM and relationship

Relationship management was highlighted in the AMA's new definition. Thus, relationship was then no longer a simple alternative. Besides, for some authors, the contrasts between relational and transactional marketing were less relevant. Zineldin and Philipson (2007), for example, stated that the traditional MM theory is an essential requirement for building and sustaining relationships with customers, and that there is a need to blend relational MM and transactional MM. Whether it was put forth as a new paradigm or not, relationship marketing inevitably reappeared with strength, helped by the 2008 crisis that revealed different sensitivities. Relationship was also embraced by experiential marketing which, in its second generation, was no longer envisioned as the proposal of an experiential offering designed by the company, but rather a cocreation experience, with an active consumer.

Also, due to the emergent use of social media for marketing purposes, the mid-2000s set the stage for a different kind of relationship, called «many to many", and for a more community-based marketing.

Further digitalization and the inclusion of social media in the MM

In the 2000s, digital marketing became more sophisticated. This period saw the birth of the major social networking services Facebook, You Tube and Twitter and the creation of major platforms of the «sharing economy», as well as the development of a lot of new tools like ewow, customer reviews, etc. With the expansion of offerings, there was a remarkable increase in the use of online social forums in digital media.

Being built on an architecture of participation and on a «horizontalization» of relationships, these emerging Web 2.0 technologies led companies to redefine some key aspects of their MM. For Mangold and Faulds (2009), social media were a hybrid element of the promotion mix. According to Bryant (2009), participation is more relevant than ever with the Web 2.0 revolution; but it is more than a supplementary P to the MM. Participation should now encompass all of the four Ps as a lens through with the Ps should be approached. It is the Web 2.0 MM.

MM and stakeholders: the need to go beyond the 4Ps and beyond the consumer

In the face of the changing marketing landscape, it was imperative to take up the challenge of integrating the interactive dimension of the new digital environment, but also the long term perspective, in order to serve more institutional objectives and rally different audiences. For the first time, the term "stakeholder" was included in the AMA's new definition of marketing, giving the concept of "stakeholder marketing" a central place into the field's body of thought. Encouraged by this renewed interest, Balmer (2006), in favor of an institutional model of stakeholders, refined its corporate MM: 6Cs (instead of the previous 11Ps). One of them, «Constituencies», is clearly allocated to stakeholder management. A research trend, called «stakeholder marketing theory», resulting from the more classical market orientation, invited the scientific community to reflect on how to go beyond reductive marketing approaches, and beyond the 4Ps and the consumer (Bhattacharya & Korschun 2008). These were new opportunities and challenges for marketing and for the MM.

One might expect that this conception of marketing, based on openness and dialogue, would be incompatible with the linear, unilateral and short-term logic that sustains the 4P MM. Yet, surprisingly, the latter continued to oppose researchers. In the end, all the academic reflections it inspired have not significantly impacted McCarthy's quadrilogy, which remains a reference. Moreover, it should be noted that there were fewer MM proposals during this period and that these proposals didn't emanate from mainstream authors. Thus, although other schools have displayed with more strength their divergence from the marketing management school, in the late 2000s, the famous 4P model (or its extended version) continued to have a prominent place in the marketer's toolkit. In the words of Zineldin and Philipson (2007, p. 229), "the Kotlerism of the 4Ps is still dominating". Yet, the 2010s seemed to herald new developments and a movement was consequently emerging. Lacking landmarks, marketing seemed to be waiting for new initiatives. The latest definition of the AMA supported this idea.

Towards a new period: another marketing and another MM?

Having failed to sufficiently capture the transformations made by marketing in its 2004 official definition, the AMA revised it again in late 2007. Marketing became:

"the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (in Gundlach & Wilkie 2010, p.90).

The 2010s were the theatre of an acceleration of the implemented changes. As a result, marketing was expected to be heavily impacted. The continuation of integration took place on several fronts. Channel integration in a cross-channel logic was undoubtedly one of the heaviest. It required bringing the physical and the digital worlds together (which met under the neologism "phygital") and it blurred certain boundaries. It rendered obsolete previously relevant oppositions such as communication and distribution, purchase and consumption, goods and services, etc., as well as, for the proponents of a service-dominant logic, the traditional BtoB/BtoC opposition.

Without falling into the excess of interactive schools, for which the producer/consumer categorization is inconsistent, we are witnessing today an unanimous recognition of the importance of customer in value creation. Information asymmetry, that has benefited marketing in the past, tends to diminish, forcing companies to take greater account of customer's interests. Moreover, if value and value creation occupy a central place, they are no longer the prerogative of the customer, because there is also a sense in creating value for stakeholders and, more broadly, as the AMA points out, for society at large; probably a strong axis for marketing which rediscovers the importance of its external legitimacy.

Finally, the internet has undoubtedly paved the way for a more participatory and social marketing, via social networks. However, as Pantano et al. (2019, p. 7) noted, "although previous studies have identified the importance of interacting with consumers as a new component for implementing successful marketing strategies, there are still few studies concerning the use of this media as a new integrative tool of the marketing mix model, while literature should also present common frameworks to take into account the online interactions within the marketing mix model". According to the authors, since social media tools support typical marketing activities such as advertising, sales, CRM, and new product development, they should be analysed by scholars and practitioners as a proactive element of the MM.

On the other hand, the physical distancing that came with the internet has led to a new relational quest, which seems urgent to consider. Relationship, consequently, reappears as a central theme, both in the academic world and in practice, probably because the continuation of digitalization has changed the landscape. Although the mid-2010s reinforced the directions taken in previous years, there is, at the same time, a will to correct marketing's excesses: excesses in the field, where the manipulative practices of the early periods led to a bad image of marketing, and excesses in research which regularly heralds revolutions that are not.

It is undeniable that an awareness emerges, and the rise of other points of view that defend a more humanist, less

mechanistic vision of marketing leaving more room for values. A "better marketing for a better world" is expected (Chandy et al. 2021). A marketing able to combine ethics and performance (see e.g., Salerno et al. 2013). There is a growing sense that marketing is looking for another model and that a new period may well open up, maybe a fourth period for the MM. Indeed, a new model would have its place, in line with the changing marketing context, compatible with its paradoxes, while being as simple as the 4Ps but also more unifying. Is the MM relaying these upheavals?

Actually, the MM undoubtedly continues to interest researchers, and new models are clearly inspired by rising trends. In a reissue of their book "Marketing Management", Kotler et al. (2012) exposed four new Ps (People, Process, Action Programmes and Performance) that better reflect the concept of holistic marketing. Besides, Warrink (2018) evaluated in detail the effect of the implementation of the Marketing 3.0 concept on the 7P MM.

Some models try to fully fit into the AMA's new definition that was reapproved in 2017. For example, Peattie and Belz (2010) proposed a new 4C sustainability MM (Customer solutions, Customer cost, Convenience and Communication.). Sheth and Sisodia (2011) presented a 4A quadrilogy (Acceptability, Affordability, Accessibility and Awareness) in a book with the evocative title «The 4 A's of marketing: creating value for customers, companies and society». Londhe (2014) propounded a purely conceptual model in 4Vs which combines value and stakeholders (Valued Customers, Value to the Customers, Value to Society and Value to the marketer). We find the same willingness to overcome the challenges posed to the environment and the society at large in Bhalerao and Deshmukh (2015). They proposed to achieve a more holistic approach to "green marketing" by blending its principles into the 4P MM, redesigned for the context of sustainable development.

Pomering's (2017) taxonomy obviously incorporates ethical and social concerns. Gordon's (2012) model is an expanded mix for application to contemporary social marketing, encompassing new concepts or tools such as stakeholder engagement, relational thinking and co-creation. Supporters of a broadening movement of social marketing, Tapp and Spotswood (2013) reconfigured a model that moves from the 4Ps towards a more integrative model. Certain researchers rather presented a revised MM adapted to the needs of BoP (Bottom of the Pyramid) customers (Chikweche & Fletcher 2012; Purohit et al. 2020). For their part, Ettenson et al. (2013) revisited the solution approach in the BtoB context. In turn, Batat (2019) took on the 7Ps of the "old" MM and introduced the 7Es of the new experiential MM (Experience, Exchange, Extension, Emphasis, Empathy, Emotional touchpoints, Emic/Etic process), a tool that focuses on the consumer as a starting point in marketing strategies. There are also many recent initiatives, in specific fields such as hotels, health-care, wine, luxury, etc.

E-marketing has undoubtedly remained one of the biggest challenges to the MM and the relevance of the 4Ps of marketing in today digital world continues to spark debate. Some authors reassessed the MM through the lens of digitalization. Among the points of interest was the inclusion of social networks into the traditional MM models, as an element of the promotional MM (Guillermo & Galobart 2011), or more broadly as a new element of the traditional MM model (Pantano et al. 2019). Luo (2017) proposed a new framework for the context of the mobile commerce, namely 4 e-Ps (Pull-push participative communication, Personalization, Promptness and Privacy). In order to adapt to today's technological environment, Jackson et al. (2016) conceptualized a customer mix as a prerequisite for the MM and addressed the subject of a Digital Marketing Communication 2.0 (DMC 2.0) to develop a dialogue with customers and facilitate conversations between customers using internet-based communication platforms. In order to fully embrace today's "phygital world", Kotler et al. (2018) introduced a new set of connected MM, the 4Cs (Co-creation, Currency, Communal activation and Conversation), as part of the concept of Marketing 4.0. Finally, in a very recent paper, integrating the presumption activity into the core of marketing, Demirbag-Kaplan and Cavusoglu (2022) presented a new MM model labelled with 4Ss (namely, Solutions, Smartness, Speed, and Semiotics), that highlights how the traditional 4Ps or 4Cs should be addressed from a co-creation perspective.

Conclusion

MM's evolutions have been traced from its birth until its most recent manifestations. A temporal presentation of the literature allowed to demonstrate that its metamorphoses comply with those of marketing discourse. Indeed, whether they conformed to the evolution of the mainstream thinking or to a parallel movement, the numerous initiatives punctuating the history of the MM aspired to compensate for the perceived shortcomings of the dominant model, and to provide a model that is more in line with the marketing and contextual realities revealed over time. The emergence of streams of thought, that resulted from a path parallel to consensus and defend another vision of marketing, played a significant role, contributing either to shaping the mix through renewed approaches, or to moving away from it for the benefit of more radical positions that advocate a shift of paradigm.

This article has shown the unsuspected wealth and the exceptional diversity of this old concept as well as its high resilience. During the six decades that followed its first formulation, many expressions of the MM have been proposed in order to adapt it, as effectively as possible, to each of the contexts with which it has been confronted. Most of these alternative propositions emanated from a specific marketing environment, such as services marketing. Therefore, some of them turned out to be perfectly adequate, which is not surprising: tailor-made generally wins over ready-to-wear. Nevertheless, the universality of the 4P mix remains its main advantage. It is like a «Swiss army knife» that allows coping more or less successfully with any commercial situation.

Besides, we share Baker's opinion (2016b, p. 306) that "underlying criticism of the MM mode is the mistaken view that it was ever intended as a 'theory' of marketing rather than a currently useful generalization or helpful learning and teaching tool". Thus, as a tool in building and implementing an effective marketing strategy, the 4P MM seems here to stay, whether dominant logic or not. The economic entrenchment of a grid that aims to help managers better represent the means to act on supply and demand probably explains the permanence of this concept.

The fact remains that marketing and the MM must continue to take up challenges, if only because marketing seeks to meet stakeholders' expectations, which implies renewing itself as society changes. "The MM has arrived at a crossroad, with opposing scenarios for its future" (Wichmann et al. 2022, p. 1). Our point of view is that a real opportunity is coming forth for more inclusive, more holistic, and above all more balanced approaches. Beyond the multiple versions of the mix referenced over time, the latest socio-economic trends seem to ask for another way to do marketing, leaving the door open for new models of the MM.

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