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## Woolley Marketing: the 4Ps of marketing or no Ps please

In his regular Mumbrella column, Trinity P3 founder and global CEO Darren Woolley suggests wannabe marketing advice should mind its Ps and Qs.

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by [DARREN WOOLLEY](#)



How many Ps are there in marketing? Well, just using Google, I have found up to 12. The 12 Ps include product, place, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, process, proof (social), portfolio, prestige, productivity and performance (counted as one) and Packaged, according to Laman7, a web design company in Malaysia.

Or you can swap a few of these you do not like for presentation, positioning, persona, purpose and payment, according to award-winning global chief marketing officer, Mark Berg.

Or there are even a few more from the over-achieving Robin Trehan, whose 15 Marketing Ps include many of the above, plus public, personalisation, protection, purse, pouch, promise and principles.

Now, almost anyone who has worked in marketing has heard of the 4Ps – product, place, price and promotion. Even if 100% of your professional career is in the last P – promotion – you have probably heard of the other three. Although perhaps, if your perspective is only from a world of promotion, you may be confused as to where the other three apply.

So it appears that since they were originally defined, many in the industry have taken it upon themselves to add to the 4Ps to give us a 500% increase in 60 years. The trouble is that I am not sure the contributions have added to the value of the original model.



Cartoon by Dennis Flad, published with permission (2021)

Earlier this year, Mark Ritson took up this point, provoked it appears by an opinion piece on Medium, which offered an alternative to the 4Ps of marketing. Ritson is always provocative, but it appears his criticism of the perspective offered and the person offering it was quickly conflated by many of those who provided the 207 comments and more than 1,400 responses.

The fact is that marketing is filled with these models. The Brand Onion, the Marketing Flywheel, the Marketing Funnel, SWOT analysis, Porter's Five Forces, Market Segmentation and more. Some of these marketing models and principles made Ritson's Top 10 Marketing BS list including the USP, Simon Sinek's Golden Circle, Brand Archetypes, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and 'almost anything by Gary Vee'.

But here is the point. Many of these marketing theories and models are largely based on observation, and some are supported with data. In scientific terms they could be more accurately called a hypothesis, often expressed as a model. The hypothesised model may be considered a theory, when consistent measurable observations support the model. Think much of the work done by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute and Byron Sharp and the team. But few, if any in marketing, are scientific principles.

So, what does this mean for marketing? And for those in marketing looking for insight and direction? It is important to look beyond the hype and apply critical thinking to many of these models and theories. What supporting data, or what established knowledge, or demonstrable impact, does this new model or theory have to support it? And why is this person sharing this with you? After all, if you discovered the unifying principle of marketing success, would you be sharing it openly and widely for free?





The truth is many of the recent marketing models being pushed are actually – first and foremost – sales or promotional tools, either promoting a technology platform, or a marketing business, or a new book. The easiest way to get trade media interest is to come up with a new and more successful model for marketing.

There is a terrific aphorism generally attributed to the statistician George Box: 'All models are wrong, some are useful'. And remember – Box was talking about statistical or scientific models, most of which are based on rigorous data analysis or some kind of mathematical proof. Many so-called marketing models are simply opinions, often based on mere observations. And we all know what they say about opinions – about what they are like, and how everyone has one...

So yes, some marketing models are useful. Others, perhaps not so.

But rather than trying to reinvent the wheel or add yet another P to yet another marketing model, perhaps the first step is really to understand the marketing model at hand and work out if it is useful for you, or not.



Darren Woolley is the founder and global CEO at Trinity P3. Woolley Marketing is a regular Mumbrella column.

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