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Business Management And The Applicability Of The 7P's As A Marketing Tool In Organizations

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Abstract:
The aim of this research was to analyse the applicability of the 7P's as a marketing tool in organizations. Using a bibliographical research methodology, the elements of the marketing mix - product, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence - and their interactions were examined. The results revealed that each component contributes to generating a value proposition that satisfies the customer. With regard to the product, the importance of aligning the characteristics and benefits offered with the needs and preferences of the target market was noted, ensuring that the perceived value corresponds to consumer expectations. With regard to price, it was found that pricing strategies must take into account not only costs and market conditions, but also the value perceived by the customer, balancing competitiveness and profitability. The research also looked at the market, highlighting the importance of choosing distribution channels and logistics for product availability and accessibility, factors that directly impact the customer experience and the company's competitiveness. Analysing promotion revealed the need for integrated and cohesive communication, using a variety of promotional strategies to reach and engage the target audience. With regard to the people element, the importance of human interaction in the perception of service and customer satisfaction is emphasised, indicating that investment in employee training and development is essential to guarantee quality service and a positive company image. With regard to processes, the research showed that the management of internal processes is fundamental to the delivery of products and services, contributing to efficient operation and competitive advantage. Finally, with regard to physical evidence, it was possible to observe that tangible elements and the physical environment associated with services influence customer perception and satisfaction, requiring attention to the aesthetic and functional details of the organization. In conclusion, the research highlighted that the integration and coordinated management of all the elements of the marketing mix are essential to strengthen the company's position in the market and guarantee a sustainable competitive advantage, emphasising the importance of a holistic and well-structured approach.

Keywords: *Services marketing; Marketing mix; 7P's.*

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I. Introduction

Services marketing, a field of study within the marketing area, plays a fundamental role in the management and promotion of services in an increasingly competitive market. Unlike tangible products, services are intangible, which represents an additional challenge for organizations when trying to communicate and deliver value to their customers. The intangibility of services, combined with their heterogeneity and perishability, requires a marketing approach that goes beyond traditional practices. In this context, the concept of services marketing gains relevance by exploring strategies that cater to the particularities of these intangible assets and create a positive experience for the consumer (Ferreira Junior, 2017).

One of the models used in service marketing is the 7P's, which expands the traditional 4P's marketing mix (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) to include three additional components: People, Processes and Physical Proof. This approach broadens the understanding of the variables that affect the offer and perception of services. The "People" element encompasses everyone involved in delivering the service, from employees to customers, and its importance is reflected in the quality of service and the building of relationships. "Processes" refers to the procedures, workflows and systems that ensure the efficient and effective delivery of services, while "Physical

Evidence" involves the tangibles that help form the image and credibility of the service offering, such as facilities and support materials (Zeithmal; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

The applicability of the 7P's as a marketing tool allows organizations to address and improve aspects that directly influence the customer experience and operational efficiency. In a service environment, where the interaction between customer and supplier is fundamental, attention to each of these components can determine the success or failure of a marketing strategy. Companies that adopt the 7P's can create a differentiated value proposition that not only meets customer needs, but also exceeds their expectations, providing a significant competitive advantage (Prado et al., 2017).

In addition, the practical application of the 7P's can help organizations adjust their strategies in response to changes in the market and consumer expectations. For example, the evolution of technologies and accelerated digitalisation have led many companies to re-evaluate their processes and physical evidence, incorporating new channels and platforms to improve service delivery. The successful integration of these elements can lead to an increase in customer satisfaction, loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendation, critical aspects for the growth and long-term sustainability of organizations (Lovelock; Wirtz; Hemzo, 2011).

Therefore, understanding and applying the 7P's effectively is essential for the strategic management of services. By integrating the elements of the model into the planning and execution of their marketing activities, companies can not only meet the specific challenges of the sector, but also create a solid competitive edge. This model offers a framework that helps align service delivery with customer expectations, promoting a results-orientated approach to services marketing (Zeithmal; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

In view of the above, the aim of this research was to analyse the applicability of the 7P's as a marketing tool in organizations. The justification for carrying out this research lies in the importance of marketing strategies in a competitive market, where managing all aspects of marketing - from product and price to people and processes - is essential for organizational success. The 7P's analysis provides an understanding of the variables that affect marketing performance, offering companies a systematic approach to aligning their strategies with customer needs and optimising their performance in the market.

II. Methodology

This research was conducted using a bibliographical approach, with the aim of analysing the applicability of the 7P's model as a marketing tool in organizations. This method was chosen because of the need to understand the theory and practices related to services marketing, and to explore how the 7P's model can be applied to improve the management and promotion of services in a competitive market.

The research involved a survey of the relevant literature, covering various sources of information. Important academic databases were consulted, such as SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online), which offers access to scientific articles from Brazilian journals. The Scopus database was also used to identify international articles and obtain a global overview of the practices and theories related to the 7P's model. In addition, the Web of Science contributed to the collection of articles. Institutional repositories and digital libraries were also consulted to access dissertations, theses and specialised books, providing a theoretical basis and contextualising the 7P's model within services marketing.

The research process followed a series of methodological stages. Initially, clear criteria were defined for the inclusion and exclusion of materials. We included studies that directly addressed the 7P's model and its application in services marketing, as well as research that discussed aspects related to the intangibility, heterogeneity and perishability of services. Material that was not pertinent to the topic or lacked academic rigour was excluded.

Based on these criteria, articles, books and documents were collected. The selection of materials was based on the relevance of the titles and abstracts and, when necessary, the texts were read in full to ensure that they were in line with the research objective. After collection, the materials were subjected to qualitative analyses. This analysis involved floating readings, where exploratory and segmented readings of the texts were carried out to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Finally, the information extracted was systematised and organised in such a way as to provide an understanding of the 7P's model, its practical and theoretical applications. The main contributions and gaps in the existing literature were identified.

III. Results And Data Analysis

Marketing mix

The concept of the marketing mix, also known as the marketing mix, was introduced in the 1950s by Neil Baldwin, a professor at Harvard Business School at Harvard University, who sought to list a range of business activities that could have an impact on consumers. Neil Baldwin contributed to the evolution of the Marketing Mix, emphasising that each of these elements should be considered together, rather than in isolation. He also emphasised the importance of considering the consumer as a central element in all marketing decisions (Amaral, 2000).

Later, Professor Jerome McCarthy, from the University of Michigan, refined Neil Baldwin's theory and separated the elements of the marketing mix into four groups, thus giving rise to the 4P's of marketing: product, price, place and promotion. Jerome McCarthy's premises were set out in the book "*Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*", which was published in 1960 and became known for its clear and objective language, presenting practical and real examples of the application of the concepts presented.

In 1961, Albert Frey proposed that the four elements of the marketing mix should be classified into two main factors: the offer, represented by the product, packaging, price, brand and technical assistance to employees; and the methods and means, which include distribution channels, advertising, personal selling, publicity and sales promotion. The following year, in 1962, Lazer and Kelley drew up a new proposal for classifying the marketing mix, which was divided into three factors: goods and services, distribution and communication. However, none of these divisions became as popular as the initial classification proposed by Jerome McCarthy (Rossi, 2003).

The marketing mix gained greater notoriety through Kotler (1996, p. 90), who characterised the marketing mix as "the set of controllable variables that the company can use to influence consumer responses". This characterisation was set out in the book "*Marketing Management*", which is considered a complete marketing management manual as it presents the main marketing theories and practices. The book is divided into three parts, with the first part covering the fundamentals of marketing, the second part dealing with the development of marketing strategies and the third part discussing the implementation and control of marketing strategies.

Throughout the book, Kotler (1996) explores various topics related to marketing, including the marketing mix (4Ps), market analysis, market segmentation, *branding*, marketing communications, managing distribution channels, digital marketing, among others. One of the book's main contributions to the field of marketing was the introduction of the concept of marketing as a business philosophy, based on market orientation and meeting the needs and desires of consumers. It also emphasises the importance of strategic marketing management, which must be integrated into the company's general management and contribute to achieving business objectives.

However, with the development and growth of the service sector in the global economy, the 4 P's have become ineffective in meeting contemporary demands, as these elements were focused entirely on product management. At this juncture, various authors have started to consider the changes that have taken place in the global macro-environment, taking into account social, political, economic and technological transformations, which have had an impact on various spheres of human life, especially the mode of production and consumption (Vargo; Lusch, 2004).

Thus, it became necessary to expand the marketing mix to take into account three more elements: people, processes and physical evidence. The 7Ps marketing model was first presented by Bernard Booms and Mary Bitner in an article entitled "*Marketing Strategies and Organisation Structures for Service Firms*", published in 1981 in the *Journal of Marketing* (Booms; Bitner, 1981).

The authors proposed that the marketing mix, originally made up of the 4Ps (product, price, promotion and place), be expanded to include three new elements to better accommodate the unique characteristics of services compared to tangible products. Since then, the 7Ps model has become widely recognised and is used by many companies and scientists around the world as a way of recognising the growing importance of the intangible elements that are present in the corporate sphere.

Product

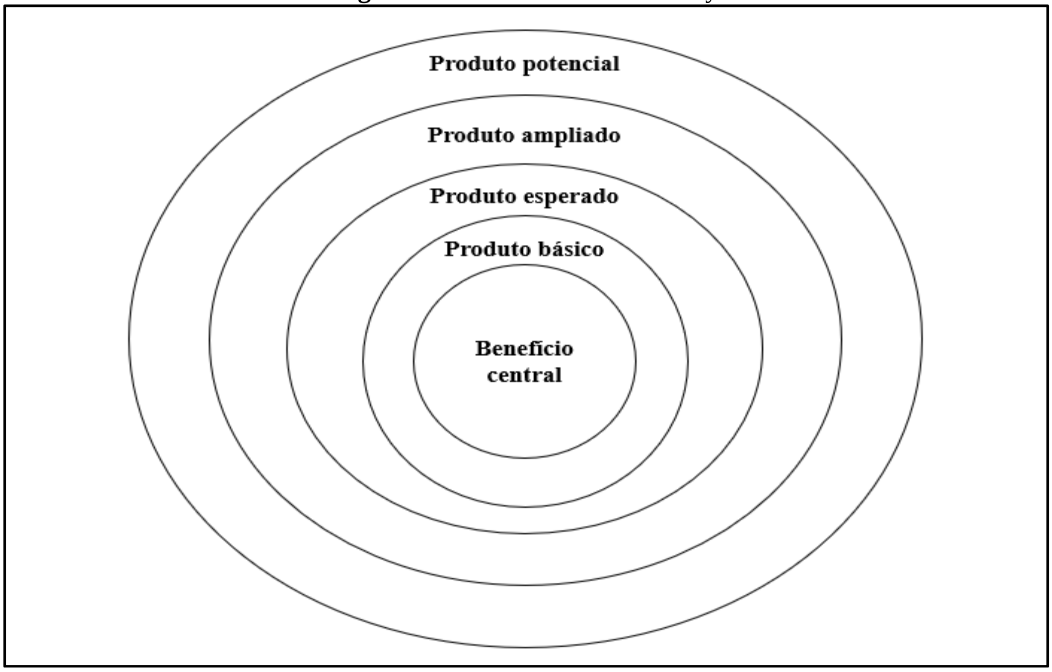
The product is characterised as encompassing all the goods and services that the company offers to the target market in order to satisfy consumers' needs and desires. The product is often associated merely with physical goods, but it also includes intangible aspects such as services, brands and ideas. It is therefore an element with tangible and impalpable characteristics, whose main objective is to fulfil consumer expectations (Etzel; Walker; Stanton, 2001).

According to Stevens et. al (2004, p. 153), "a product is more than just the materials that make it up, and a service is more than its end result". This is because people don't just take into account the tangible attribute of the product, but also the intangible added parts which are often difficult to measure, quantify and measure.

From this perspective, a product (or service) must be capable of generating value for the customer, as well as providing physiological, psychological, spiritual and/or aesthetic satisfactions. Generating value helps to improve the consumer experience in the purchasing process and, at the same time, helps organizations to retain their customers. In this way, the "success of a product on the market is generally not related to its tangible attributes, but to the perception of its value by consumers" (Kotler; Armstrong, 1998).

Authors such as Kotler and Keller (2006) emphasise that there are five hierarchical levels of customer value: core benefit, basic product, expected product, extended product and potential product. The customer value hierarchy originated from the hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow, and is a technique used in the process of developing products and/or services with the aim of identifying the values perceived by consumers or users. Figure 1 details the customer value hierarchy.

Figure 1. Customer value hierarchy



Source: Kotler and Keller (2006).

A priori, it is worth highlighting the core benefit, which is the level at which the consumer is consuming the fundamental benefit of the product. The basic product, in turn, refers to the moment when the core benefit becomes a basic product. As for the expected product, this is characterised by being a stage in which the consumer makes a series of attributions and conditions in relation to the product. The penultimate level, the extended product, refers to the stage at which the consumer exceeds their expectations of the product. Finally, the last level is the potential product, where all the transformations that the product must undergo in the future take place in order to achieve differentiation in the offer and new ways of satisfying consumers.

For Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2001), products are divided into two categories: consumer products and business products. This division was made so that organizations could better understand the type of product being offered to consumers, as well as to develop more effective marketing programmes.

As the authors reiterate, consumer products are intended for end consumers and include convenience goods, comparison goods and speciality goods. Business products, on the other hand, are intended for resale, the production of other products and/or the supply of services to organizations. In the case of business products, they include raw materials, manufacturing materials and parts, installations, ancillary equipment and operating materials.

When addressing the product element in the service segment, Lovelock, Wirtz and Hemzo (2011, p. 22) emphasise that:

The service product encompasses the total offer that delivers the solution to the customer's need. In this sense, we use the word "product" broadly for solutions in the form of goods or services, not restricting it to physical goods, a concept that derives from the culture of production. The service product, therefore, is a product insofar as it delivers the solution, and it is a service because the service or intangible component predominates in this solution, in relation to the physical or tangible component.

In the service sector, the product is intrinsically linked to offering a solution to the customer's need. Unlike tangible physical products, where the emphasis is on delivering a material object, services seek to satisfy customer needs through personalised experiences and solutions. In this way, the service product goes beyond simply providing an isolated service and therefore encompasses the entire customer experience, from the first contact to the after-sales service (Lovelock; Wirtz; Hemzo, 2011).

Thus, by providing a solution to customer needs, both products and services can be considered as "products". The distinction between them lies in the predominance of the service component in services, whereas in tangible physical goods, the physical component is more prominent. This means that even if there is no tangible physical object involved, services are considered products because they provide a solution or benefit for customers, with the emphasis on the experience or intangible aspect of the service (Lovelock; Wirtz; Hemzo, 2011).

At the heart of providing a service as a product is identifying and defining the characteristics that make it distinctive and valuable to customers, which involves a process of understanding market needs and consumer demands, as well as analysing trends and customer expectations in relation to the services offered. The emphasis is not only on describing the services themselves, but mainly on the benefits and advantages that these services provide to customers (Lovelock; Wirtz; Hemzo, 2011).

Price

Price is the monetary value that consumers must pay to obtain the product and/or service they want. In this case, pricing must be fair and take into account certain aspects, such as: the degree of sensitivity of demand in relation to price, the competition, the product itself, the contribution margin, among other factors (Kotler; Armstrong, 1998).

Authors such as Churchill and Peter (2003, p. 314) add that "price is the amount of money, goods or services that must be given to acquire ownership or use of a product". Price, in this case, can be defined through an economic marginal analysis, which in turn assesses the efficiency of a particular activity or decision, comparing its marginal costs and benefits. Through this analysis, managers can devise more assertive measures to cover the costs involved in a given product and/or service, in order to guarantee greater profitability for the organization.

Products and/or services are often priced using the *Mark-Up* method, which is based on the use of an index that is applied to the cost to reach a certain selling price. Thus, *Mark-Up* only takes into account costs and the desired profit margin, forgetting about the competition and customers (Churchill; Petter, 2003).

It is therefore essential for companies to carry out research to identify customers' perception of value in relation to the products and/or services on offer. Consumer research helps to identify the main attributes that add value to the offer, as well as which elements are perceived as unnecessary. In this case, it should be borne in mind that each individual has a scale of value and a price they are willing to pay for a given item and/or service (Lovelock; Wirtz; Hemzo, 2011).

As Richins (1994, p. 504) reiterates, "economic literature has given way to value within the context of exchange; the value of a product to a consumer is represented by the price they expect to pay and originates from the utility or satisfactions that the product provides". Therefore, the value perceived by the customer encompasses the expected price range and the cost-benefit ratio, and this ratio includes both the monetary cost and the value added by the brand.

Appropriate pricing is a critical issue for the management of any company and, because of this, it must be approached strategically and carefully. This is because setting high prices can alienate potential customers, while very low prices can generate distrust in the quality of the product and/or service offered. Price setting is therefore a strategic tool capable of helping to meet consumer expectations and maximise company profits (Richins, 1994).

According to Cobra and Zwarg (1996, p. 93):

[...] price must be closely linked to quality, but not just the intrinsic quality of what the service is, of what it does, but of what the customer expects the service to do for them. Often a service is "priceless", depending on a customer's need for it. So the concept of expensive and cheap is extremely relative: relative to the satisfaction of latent or urgent needs.

The aim of value pricing is therefore to provide a combination of costs and product quality in order to satisfy consumers' needs and desires, as well as helping organizations to raise revenue. To this end, it is essential for managers to analyse factors both internal and external to the organization in order to balance the company's financial needs with those of consumers.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (1998), in order to achieve a fair pricing policy, the positioning of the product and/or service in the market must be taken into account. This positioning can be done through two strategies: cost leadership, where the aim is to offer a product and/or service that is the cheapest on the market; or *premium* product, where the aim is to offer a product and/or service with quality, thus involving a greater monetary outlay on the part of the consumer.

In the case of products and/or services positioned to be *premium* in the market, Stevens et. al (2004, p. 206) emphasises that "their quality, performance and prestige must be such that consumers are convinced that the value charged justifies the premium price". When opting for the premium strategy, the company must focus on creating value for its customers by offering a product or service that is perceived as superior to its competitors. This superiority can be achieved in various ways, such as through quality, design, branding, innovation, customer experience or personalised service.

Companies that have little or no competitive edge must constantly monitor their competitors in order to analyse the values aligned with the market price. By analysing the price offered by the competition, companies can ascertain whether their products and/or services are of a similar quality and thus decide whether they can offer the same, higher or lower price than their competitors (Las Casas, 2001).

In this respect, knowing the competitor's structures and prices are fundamental elements in deciding how to position the product and/or service on the market, as well as in defining the marketing strategy to be adopted. In addition, monitoring the competition can also provide valuable *insights* into market trends, consumer needs and desires, and possible opportunities for innovation and differentiation for the company. Therefore, keeping up to date with the competition is crucial to ensure the survival and success of the business in an increasingly competitive environment (Churchill; Peter, 2003).

Pricing services is the strategy for organizations that offer services rather than tangible products. Unlike physical products, where the cost of production and materials can be more easily quantified, determining the price of a service can be challenging due to its intangible nature and the lack of clear value references (Lima; Soares; Guedes, 2016).

According to Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2014), there are three approaches to pricing: cost-based pricing, competition-based pricing and demand-based pricing.

In cost-based pricing, a company calculates its expenses on the basis of labour and raw materials, adds values or percentages relating to indirect costs and profits, and arrives at the final price. The competition-based pricing approach focuses on the prices charged by the company in the same sector or market. It doesn't always involve charging the same rates as competitors. On the contrary, a company adopts the prices of competing companies as anchors for the price it wants to charge its customers. This approach is predominantly used in two situations: (1) where services are standardised between providers, as in the case of dry cleaning, and (2) in oligopolies, where there are few providers. The third approach to pricing, demand-based pricing, involves setting prices in a way that is consistent with customer perceptions of value: prices are based on what customers pay for the services provided (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014, p. 443-446).

Cost-based pricing in services is an approach that involves calculating the price of a service based on the costs associated with providing it. In this method, the company identifies and calculates all the costs involved in delivering the service, including expenditure on labour, materials, equipment, facilities and other operating costs (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

To begin with, the company must understand all the cost components related to providing the service. Once these costs have been identified, the company then adds a desired profit margin to the cost price to determine the final price of the service. This profit margin can be fixed, based on a standard percentage applied to costs, or variable, depending on factors such as market competitiveness, demand for the service and the company's profit targets (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

Authors such as Oliveira and Sena (2023) add that the company must take into account not only the direct costs, but also the indirect costs associated with providing the service. By identifying and calculating all direct and indirect costs, the company can determine a price that adequately covers these costs and provides a profit margin sufficient to sustain the business. However, it is important to balance the price with the customer's perception of value and the competitiveness of the market, ensuring that the final price is reasonable and attractive to customers, while at the same time guaranteeing profitability for the company.

Competition-based pricing, in turn, is a strategy in which a company sets the prices of its services based on the prices charged by its direct competitors in the same market or sector. In this method, the company uses the prices charged by competitors as a benchmark to set its own prices, seeking to remain competitive and attractive to customers (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

Service pricing based on competition does not necessarily imply charging the same prices as competitors, but rather using these prices as a reference point or anchor. The company can choose to price its services slightly above, below or in line with competitors' prices, depending on its market positioning strategy and profit targets (Lima; Soares; Guedes, 2016).

Finally, demand-based service pricing is characterised by being a strategy in which service prices are set according to customers' willingness and ability to pay for them, reflecting their perceptions of value. In this way, prices are set based on an analysis of customer characteristics and behaviour, as well as market conditions. This type of pricing recognises that different customers assign different values to the same services, based on factors such as individual needs, preferences, perception of quality and financial capacity. Therefore, prices are adjusted to meet the different demands and maximise the company's revenue (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014; Nobre, 2016).

Square

According to Kotler and Armstrong (1998, p. 31), the marketplace "involves the company's activities that make the product available to target consumers". Because of this, the marketplace is also known as a distribution channel, thus encompassing an organised system of institutions and people who carry out the logistical activities necessary to offer products and/or services to consumers.

For the product or service to reach the end consumer, several people are involved in the distribution process, such as manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. Distribution channels require effective integration between *supply chain* agents, as products and services must be in the right place, in the right quantity and at the right time to be consumed (Stevens et al., 2004).

In this way, Leite and Nogueira (2022) add that those involved in the supply chain must understand all the technologies involved in the fourth industrial revolution, as well as analysing the cost/benefit they will get from the resulting investments to keep up with the changes in this new market dynamic. This is because Industry 4.0 technologies are altering traditional production paradigms and providing the supply chain with a global vision of production methods.

From this perspective, the more effective the logistics, the greater the consumer satisfaction. In addition, more efficient logistics also helps to reduce organizations' operating costs and, as a result, companies must look for the best storage, handling and transport alternatives for providing products and/or services (Kotler; Keller, 2006).

To do this, managers must prioritise three functions during distribution: traditional functions, which are associated with the purchase and sale of products; logistical functions, whose tasks focus on storage, organization and distribution; and facilitating functions, which include financing marketing research. The marketing team, in this case, is responsible for analysing the best distribution channel alternatives, taking into account the product and/or service offered, the customers, the costs and the time to market (Las Casas, 2001).

In general, there are two types of channels for distributing products and/or services: direct channels and indirect channels. Generally, smaller companies may prefer direct channels to maintain control over quality and brand image, while larger companies may opt for indirect channels to reach a larger audience and achieve a higher sales volume (Stevens et. al, 2004).

Direct distribution channels involve selling directly from the manufacturer to the end consumer without intermediaries, encompassing sales through the manufacturer's own shops, online sales direct from the manufacturer or catalogue sales. Direct distribution channels give manufacturers greater control over how their products are sold and distributed, allowing them to connect directly with their end customers.

Indirect distribution channels involve intermediaries between the manufacturer and the end consumer. Intermediaries can be wholesalers, retailers, distributors or agents, who buy the products from the manufacturer and sell them to the end consumer. Indirect distribution channels can offer the manufacturer greater geographical reach and greater distribution efficiency, but the manufacturer loses some control over how its products are marketed and sold.

The choice of distribution channel depends on various factors, such as the type of product, the size of the company, the target market, the marketing strategy, the nature of the product and/or service, the availability of intermediaries, financial resources and consumer preferences (Stevens et. al, 2004).

In the service sector, the square element refers to distribution channels and the accessibility of services to consumers. Unlike tangible products, which can be physically stored and distributed through traditional retail chains, services are often intangible and therefore their distribution is more complex (Siqueira; Christino, 2017). As Prado et al. (2017, p. 78) reiterate, "the distribution of services almost always implies the distribution of fixed costs. Distributing services requires them to be available when the customer needs them, since they are not stockable and therefore require more careful planning."

Thus, the square in the service sector includes the physical location of service points, as well as the digital and online channels through which services are accessed and delivered. In addition, the accessibility of services to customers is emphasised, which involves not only the physical proximity of service points, but also convenience and ease of access. Because of this, it is crucial in the service sector to identify the points of contact with customers and ensure that they are accessible, convenient and consistent with the company's value proposition (Pereira et al., 2015).

Promotion

Promotion is the communication process that a company uses to reach its target market. From this perspective, promotion encompasses a set of strategies to publicise the product or service on offer, with the aim of persuading people to consume it. Promotional actions are carried out through marketing channels, where messages are provided in a language capable of reaching the target audience efficiently (Las Casas, 2001).

When drawing up promotional activities, managers must carry out strategic studies and planning with a long-term perspective. In such studies and planning, it is essential to involve the participation of employees from all areas and hierarchical levels of the company, as well as using an integrated set of methods, media and techniques. This is because unilateral communication may not be as effective as interconnected communication that contains various databases and components that interact with each other in a synergistic way (Stevens et. al, 2004).

In order to keep promotional actions integrated, companies can adopt a set of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) techniques. Integrated Marketing Communication is a system for managing and integrating the elements of marketing communication, where various marketing strategies are used to reach the target audience, such as: direct marketing, indirect marketing, advertising, publicity, merchandising, among others (Maja; Irene, 2012).

Generally speaking, Shimp (2009, p. 29) emphasises that Integrated Marketing Communication is "a communication process that encompasses the planning, creation, integration and implementation of various forms of promotions, launched over time, for a brand's target customers". In this sense, the main purpose of CIM is to directly or indirectly influence consumer beliefs, feelings and behaviour.

Authors such as Ogden and Crescitelli (2007) add that CIM makes it possible to integrate all the company's forms of communication into a single plan, thus making it possible to strengthen the organizational brand, increase sales and build a lasting relationship with customers. This is possible due to the four elements that permeate integrated marketing communication: consistency, coherence, continuity and complementarity.

Authors such as Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2001) add that there are five forms of promotion: personal selling, advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity. These forms of promotion have different characteristics and, because of this, they are used in specific situations to achieve certain objectives. Table 1 details the five forms of promotion proposed by the authors.

Table 1. Five forms of promotion proposed by Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2001)

- Personal selling: consists of direct, personal communication between the seller and the buyer, the purpose of which is to present and sell a product or service. Personal selling involves face-to-face or virtual interaction between the salesperson and the client, and is more common in deals involving complex sales or high added value, such as in the property, financial, technology or *B2B* (*business-to-business*) sectors. In these cases, it is essential that the salesperson has extensive knowledge of the product or service on offer, as well as negotiation and persuasion skills
- Advertising: is a set of communication activities aimed at promoting the sale of a product or service by persuading a target audience. It is therefore a strategy that uses mass communication channels such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, social media and the internet. Advertising is a way of creating and disseminating messages to the target audience in a persuasive way, encouraging them to purchase a product or service. As such, it is a medium capable of conveying information about the benefits and advantages of the product or service offered by the company, and can be used to create and strengthen the brand's image
- Sales promotion: aims to stimulate the purchase of products or services through temporary incentives. It is a strategy that involves creating promotional actions to increase sales, attract new customers and retain existing customers. Promotional actions can be carried out in a variety of ways, such as discounts, raffles, giveaways, free samples, loyalty programmes, among others. Sales promotion is a very important tool for stimulating sales in periods of low demand or for launching new products.
- Public Relations: aims to create and maintain a positive image of the company in the eyes of its stakeholders, such as customers, employees, suppliers, investors and society in general. It is a strategy that involves communication and relationships with these publics, seeking to generate a positive perception of the company and its actions. Public relations actions can involve various activities, such as relations with the press, organising events, creating social awareness campaigns, sponsoring cultural events, among others.
- Advertising: this is a promotional strategy aimed at publicising and promoting a product, service or brand to the target audience. It is a form of paid communication in which the company hires advertising space in media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the internet, among others, to convey its message to consumers. Advertising actions involve the creation of advertising campaigns, which can include print adverts, television or radio commercials, *banners* on websites, *email* marketing, among other forms of media.

Source: Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2001).

The company's communication can be directed at two types of target audience: intermediary agents or consumers. Communication aimed at intermediary agents is indirect and means that the company is trying to place its products and/or services through a distribution channel. As an example, we can highlight the case of a communication made in a franchising model, the aim of which is to seek out new franchisees and spread the brand. Communication aimed at consumers, on the other hand, encompasses the direct efforts made by the manufacturing company to sell its products and/or services in retail and wholesale (Stevens et. al, 2004).

Regardless of which communication approach is chosen, companies need to adapt promotional techniques to cater for different markets, as a product and/or service can be useful for more than one type of segment. Market segmentation guides marketing strategy and begins not only with differentiating product and/or service possibilities, but above all with differentiating customer interests or needs (Kotler; Keller, 2006).

As Richers and Lima (1991) point out, segmentation consists of viewing the market from a heterogeneous perspective, with a certain number of smaller homogeneous markets that are formed from the different preferences for products and/or services among important market segments. Thus, segmentation is based on the existing split in demand and represents the rational adjustment that is made to the marketing communication process in relation to the demands of the consumer or user.

People

Service quality depends directly on the quality of the interaction between the people who permeate the organization. People are all the individuals who are involved, directly or indirectly, in providing a service or commercialising a product. In this case, people include both internal collaborators, such as shareholders and employees, and external collaborators, such as suppliers and customers (Las Casas, 2001).

Authors such as Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2014) emphasise that the human being is the main supplier of services, as people are responsible for carrying out the service and creating the image of the company in the minds of consumers. From this perspective, customers evaluate the quality of the service not only on the basis of what they receive, but also on how they are treated by the company's employees.

To substantiate these claims, Hooley, Piercy and Nicoulaud (2011, p. 257) argue that "the quality, training and enthusiasm of the people who work in the company are absolutely crucial for service providers". This is because qualified and enthusiastic employees are more likely to offer better service and deal with difficult situations more effectively.

Training is fundamental to employee qualification and enthusiasm, because when a company invests in training for its employees, it is offering them the opportunity to improve their skills and acquire new knowledge. This therefore contributes to the individual's professional growth and, at the same time, to that of the company. In addition, a well-trained employee tends to be more confident and motivated, as they know that they are able to carry out their duties more efficiently, thus enabling a more productive and efficient working environment (Chiavenato, 2020).

In this scenario, the contemporary organizational environment has increasingly demanded effective management of human resources, as people are one of the main sources of competitive advantage for companies in today's market dynamics. Based on these aspects, the quality of services depends above all on who provides them, as well as when, where and how they are provided. Because of this, human intellectual capital is a topic that is gaining increasing prominence in the business and academic spheres, given that material, technical and financial resources are no longer enough to guarantee the survival of organizations in the market (Souza; Ferreira, 2021).

According to Nakayama and Rodrigues (2001), human intellectual capital involves the set of knowledge and skills that people possess to carry out their work activities. It is therefore an intangible asset that develops from the individual's social interaction with the collective at work, which is capable of generating value for companies due to elements such as: capacity for innovation, good relationships with customers and suppliers, quality in service provision, among others.

Processes

The process element of the marketing mix encompasses all the procedures, mechanisms and flows of activities that help an organization market its products and/or services. In this respect, well-developed and managed processes help companies meet customer expectations, while poorly managed processes can lead to delays in delivery, quality problems and dissatisfaction (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

From the perspective of Graham and LeBaron (1994), there is no product or service offered by a company without the involvement of a business process. Therefore, all work carried out by companies requires a process, which in turn can be characterised as a sequential and coordinated flow of activities containing *inputs* and outputs. In the sequential flow of activities, companies transform the input into a product and/or service that is capable of having some value for a given group of clients.

Processes are therefore part of an interconnected system of activities. Processes involve *inputs*, also known as inputs, which are the inputs or raw materials that are transformed by organizations, which can include physical or abstract resources, such as information, data, skills, knowledge and ideas. *Inputs* are fundamental to the functioning of an organization, as they are the elements that feed internal processes and activities, allowing value to be created and objectives to be achieved.

From the processes, the *inputs* are modified and generate the *outputs*, which are the results, products or services. The *outputs* represent the added value that the organization creates and delivers to its customers or users. They can be tangible, such as physical products, or intangible, such as services, information or knowledge. The results, products or services represent the end goal of the processes, and the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the outputs are fundamental to the success of organizations.

However, workflow is only one form of business process. This is because workflow only considers activities that are interconnected and carried out in a specific order, which excludes processes that do not have a clear beginning and/or end, or whose flow is not well established. Business processes do not always consist of clearly defined activities in terms of their content, duration and consumption of specific resources, nor do they need to be consistent or carried out in a particular sequence (Morris; Brandon, 1994).

According to Gonçalves (2000, p. 7), "this idea of a process as a workflow - with clearly defined *inputs* and *outputs* and discrete tasks that follow a sequence and depend on each other in clear succession - comes from the engineering tradition (which also gave rise to the idea of reengineering)". In this case, there are, in short, five basic models of business processes, ranging from the most concrete and objective model, which is based on the flow of materials, to the most abstract model, which is based on the change of states of a system. Table 2 summarises the main characteristics of these models and provides illustrative examples.

Table 2. The five basic business process models

Processes such as	Example	Features
Material flow	Industrial manufacturing processes	Clear *inputs* and *outputs*, discrete activities, observable flow and linear development
Workflow	Product development Recruiting and hiring staff	Clear start and finish, discrete activities and sequence of activities
Series of steps	Modernisation of the company's industrial park Redesign of a process Acquisition of another company	Alternative paths to the result, no perceptible flow and connection between activities
Co-ordinated activities	Management development Salary negotiation	No compulsory sequence and no perceptible flow
Change of state	Business diversification Company culture change	Evolution perceptible by means of clues, weak connection between activities, durations only foreseen and low level of control possible

Source: Gonçalves (2000, p. 7).

Table 2 shows that the five basic business process models offer a comprehensive and distinctive view of organizational activities. Each model has its own characteristics and requires specific approaches to achieve its objectives. Thus, by understanding and recognising these models, companies can analyse and optimise their processes, seeking greater efficiency, control and success in their operations.

In marketing, the process is used to obtain better results through an interconnected set of activities and mechanisms that are obtained from the overall marketing process. The global marketing process involves all the steps a company takes to produce, promote, distribute and sell its products or services. This can include supply chain management, the design of production processes, inventory management, the development of sales strategies and customer relationship management (Breda, 2012).

In addition, Ferreira Júnior (2017) emphasises that an effective marketing process approach must start with understanding needs. Such an understanding allows the company to adapt its processes to provide the best possible experience for the customer during the purchasing process. In addition, it is important that the company continually monitors its marketing processes to ensure that they are producing desired results, which can include measuring marketing campaign effectiveness, monitoring customer feedback, drawing up satisfaction surveys, creating indicators and analysing the company's performance in relation to its competitors.

Processes are important for service differentiation, as they are an element capable of affecting organizational *performance*. For this reason, companies need to differentiate their processes in order to obtain a competitive advantage that guarantees an edge over the competition and, at the same time, consumer preference for the products and/or services offered (Las Casas, 2001).

Physical evidence

According to Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2014, p. 232), physical evidence characterises the "environment where the service is performed and where the company interacts with the customer, i.e. any tangible component that facilitates the performance or communication of the service". The physical environment is therefore a variable capable of influencing consumers during the purchasing decision process, since people tend to evaluate the places they visit holistically, paying attention to the physical elements of organizations.

Embodying these prerogatives, Schuster, Dias and Battistella (2016) developed a *servicescape* model, where it was possible to see a diversity of variables, factors and constructs that corroborate the influence of the physical environment on consumers' purchasing decisions. The model emphasises that the analysis of environmental elements, such as the physical structure, style, staff organization and even the way customers interact on site, plays a fundamental role in shaping the consumer's perception of the company, its products and services. Figure 5 shows the model developed by the researchers.

The physical dimensions are capable of increasing customer satisfaction and perceived quality, which contributes to a higher incidence of loyalty and, consequently, the repurchase of the product and/or service. In this sense, customer satisfaction generates word-of-mouth marketing that is capable of encouraging other people to consume what the company offers, as well as directly favouring the organizational image.

The importance of physical evidence in organizations is highlighted in the field of service marketing, which in turn is based on the experiences of consumers. This is because the experiences desired by consumers are induced around "of" or "about" something, through environmental stimuli (Solomon; Marshall; Stuart, 2015).

As services are intangible, consumers are looking for some form of tangible evaluation and, because of this, physical evidence often ends up becoming an evaluation parameter to measure the quality of the service and/or product on offer. Physical evidence therefore makes up the image and experience that customers have of a company or product, and in order to maximise the use of physical evidence in marketing, it is important to take into account the profile of the target audience and the positioning of the brand (Lam et. al, 2011).

Physical evidence is made up of an association of aesthetic, social and environmental factors, including elements such as location, the establishment's façade, layout, interior design, car park, furniture, equipment, work clothes, decoration, lighting, aromas, music and cleanliness. It can also include visual communication materials such as posters, banners, leaflets, packaging and displays (Baker et. al, 2002).

Thus, the proper use of physical evidence can bring several benefits to the company, such as improving the customer experience, increasing brand trust and credibility and differentiating it from competitors. On the other hand, lack of attention to physical evidence can result in a negative image for the company and, consequently, the loss of customers (Zeithaml; Bitner; Gremler, 2014).

IV. Final Considerations

The aim of this research was to analyse the applicability of the 7P's as a marketing tool in organizations. By investigating the fundamental elements - Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Processes and Physical Evidence - it was possible to understand the importance of each of these components in the marketing context and how their interaction can influence organizational success.

Initially, the Product was discussed, emphasising that defining the characteristics and benefits it offers contributes to customer satisfaction. A product must be developed based on an understanding of the needs and preferences of the target market, ensuring that its perceived value is aligned with consumer expectations.

The study of price has shown that the definition of pricing strategies must take into account not only costs and market conditions, but also the value that the product or service represents for the customer. Pricing strategies are essential for balancing competitiveness and profitability, directly influencing the purchasing decision.

With regard to Square, it was found that the choice of distribution channels and logistics play a role in the availability and accessibility of the product for the consumer. Efficient management of these channels has an impact on the customer experience and can be a competitive differentiator for organizations.

Analysing the Promotion revealed the importance of integrated marketing communications to create a cohesive and impactful message. Combining different promotional strategies allows for a more effective approach to reaching and persuading the target audience, reinforcing the brand's image and stimulating consumer engagement.

The People element emphasised that the quality of human interaction, both internal and external, influences the perception of the service and customer satisfaction. Investing in employee training and development is essential to guarantee high-quality service and a positive company image.

With regard to Processes, the survey indicated that efficient management of internal processes is fundamental to ensuring consistent, high-quality delivery of products and services. Well-structured and monitored processes contribute to effective operation and customer satisfaction, representing an important competitive advantage.

Finally, the Physical Evidence study highlighted that the physical environment and tangible elements associated with the provision of services play an important role in shaping customer perception and satisfaction. Attention to aesthetic and functional details can improve the consumer experience and reinforce the company's image.

In short, the research showed that the integration and effective management of all the components of the marketing mix are fundamental to the success of marketing strategies. Each element contributes in a distinct but interdependent way to creating a value proposition that fulfils customer expectations and strengthens the company's position in the market. Therefore, a holistic and well-coordinated approach is essential to achieve positive results and guarantee a sustainable competitive advantage.

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