

# Critically evaluating the marketing mix of an academic programme. The case of Master of Science in Business Management and Technology, at CITY College International Faculty of the University of Sheffield

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to analyse and evaluate the marketing mix of an academic programme currently offered at CITY College International Faculty of the University of Sheffield, in South-East European region. Although current literature is merely specialised in the area of marketing the educational experience, there is an effort to adopt, combine and bring forth similar literature findings that provide adequate academic support. The specific programme was initially introduced in 2007 in Greece. After a successful start, the College decided to offer it in two more countries (Albania & Bulgaria) during 2010. There is a thorough analysis on current marketing mix focusing in the concepts of the students' "buying" behavior, the segmentation- targeting and positioning of the programme, as well as the 7Ps. In addition, there is an argument analysis of why the College followed the specific mix. Literature review is accommodated in all phases of this analysis and evaluation. This study suggests a marketing mix that could be inherent by personalization, one-to-one marketing and social marketing elements towards adding value in the supply chain of "Student-Programme-College" experience. A combination of SWOT and PESTEL analysis is re-introduced as a compass for adapting the marketing mix in a rapidly changing environment.

**Keywords:** 4Ps, 7Ps, Marketing Mix, Marketing of Services, Academic programme, Service experience

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this section we aim to give a description of the service. In the next section there is an attempt to discuss issues on marketing planning as well as the analysis of the environment that did the College before launching the programme. In section three, there is an analysis and evaluation of the marketing mix adopted. In the fourth and final section, there are certain suggestions on a set of tools that could be further developed as well as a combination of marketing mix elements in order to achieve sustainability and create growth through this programme.

The programme of "MSc in Business Management & Technology" -originally introduced as "MSc in Technology, Innovation & Entrepreneurship (TIE)" in 2007- is a Masters Degree academic programme which is offered at CITY College the International Faculty of the University of Sheffield. It is offered in a definite scheme, which is a two-year programme with obligatory classes that take place once a month (Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday). There is a total of nine modules plus a dissertation that students have to participate and be assessed. The assessment is fully based on written course-works, submitted one for each module while the dissertation is a research oriented survey-case which includes: literature review, research methodology, data collection and analysis, findings and discussion in a technological-entrepreneurial oriented subject.

The programme has run for the first time on 2007, in Thessaloniki where the basis of College is. It had a successful start with a group of students, coming from a variety of academic disciplines and industries. At present it runs successfully in two more countries, Albania and Bulgaria in cooperation with local Universities.

The purpose of this study is to identify the marketing mix elements as used since the beginning and analyse and evaluate them with the help of literature review. Our aim is, through this evaluation to provide recommendations in the College in order to improve current efforts and usage of the mix as a marketing tool in terms of future moves.

## 2. MARKETING PLANNING & ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

According to *Magrath (1986)*, Neil Borden introduced the concept of marketing mix in 1962 while Jerome McCarthy popularised the 4Ps in 1964 (Product-Price-Place-Promotion). The idea was to provide a portfolio model in order to build the organising framework for integrating diverse marketing tasks. *Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992)* defined, the term “marketing mix” as the mixture of elements useful in pursuing a certain market response. Therefore, marketing mix is consisted of a set of inseparable tools, which reinforced marketing planning. As a result, marketing planning became a strategic choice for the decision makers of a company, who afterwards were capable of relating seemingly indifferent elements and define their strategic objectives.

*Philip Kotler (1999)* introduced the 4Cs in regards to 4Ps, describing the following equivalence:

To demonstrate the difference among sellers and consumers, and how each of them perceives the product or service, Kotler revealed the significance of incorporating consumers’ view and approach, when designing the marketing plan. In addition, he (*Kotler, 1999*) suggested the addition of two more Ps, meaning Politics and Public opinion. Actually politics refers to the power of lobbying and how this can affect the sales and the marketing plan of the firm. Public opinion refers to people that change trends, interests or get affections and this alter their behaviour and lifestyle. Such changes have consequences and alterations for the firm as well.

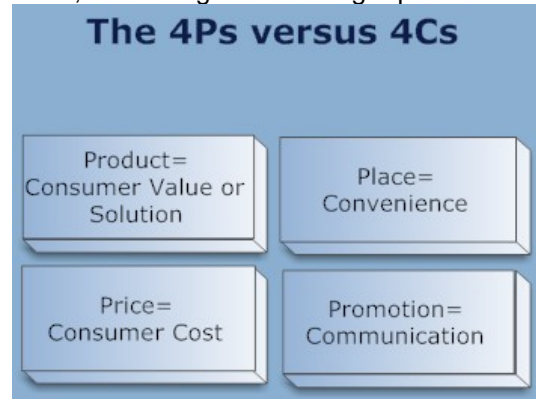


Figure 1. The 4Cs as introduced by Philip Kotler

The College applied a marketing plan based in marketing mix elements, which corresponds to the 7Ps of services marketing mix (*Mudie and Pirrie, 2006*). Moreover, it has built its primary plan in the identification of an existed market share, and market growth opportunities, which mostly derived from the changes introduced by the economic, political and legal environment in the whole region (*Hatzia Apostolou, 2011*). Especially, the Computer Science Department was designing and preparing the programme intensively for two years prior to its launch.

The first strategic action was to identify and understand the environment in terms of both micro and macro dimensions. The thorough and detailed approach in this situation analysis created the axes where the whole marketing plan depended on. In *Appendix A*, is given first of all the SWOT analysis of the academic programme as this was the first step of the attempt. It was identified that the programme has unique characteristics, runs ahead competition but may face two difficulties. First it needs to be correctly positioned in the perception of prospective students and second it may face a delay in its acceptability since it is considered too advanced. Service positioning possess a number of characteristics which makes it more difficult and challenging in contrast to products positioning. These are: (a) intangibility, (b) inseparability, (c) perishability, (d) heterogeneity, and (e) non-standardization (*Blankson and Kalafatis, 1999*). Therefore, the attempt from the College was to proactively process and measure the candidates’ perceptions towards the new programme. That was implemented through the use of all elements of the marketing plan.

The second action was an attempt to identify the micro and macro environments of the College. In *Appendix B*, is given the diagram that describes the immediate environment of the College as an attempt to register and identify the participants. The College accepts immediate impact and copes with a number of entities which are: (a) staff, (b) students, (c) media, (d) suppliers, (e) competitors, and (f) shareholders.

In continuous, in *Appendix C*, is given a PEST analysis, which represents the major impacts and changes in terms of the broader environments of the College. Economic crisis and forces of restructuring create opportunities for entering in new markets and boosting growth. Both legal and political environments force changes that are expected to affect quickly the sector of education. Since the College is an independent institution, self-funded with high entrepreneurial orientation, is expected to continue being the pioneer in the region. Thus, the specific programme could lead this effort and predefine the framework for future moves.

### 3. ANALYSIS and EVALUATION OF CURRENT MARKETING MIX

Various researchers have concluded that although the 4Ps marketing mix framework stand as a dominant marketing management paradigm, it took criticism throughout the years (*Constantinides, 2006; Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995*).

*Constantinides (2006)* identified in the mix two significant limitations, (a) the model's internal orientation and (b) the lack of personalization. Education belongs to services marketing, as it is mostly characterised by intangibility. Differences between tangibles and intangibles were the fundamental reason of considering the 4Ps approach, as inadequate.

In the current study is considered significant to give the literature taxonomy on services marketing as presented by *Constantinides (2006)* in *Appendix D*. There is a number of interesting findings through literature which some of them were adopted by the College and were incorporated in its marketing mix. In addition, this taxonomy may support future plans in terms of revealing new ideas and concepts. Furthermore, in *Appendix E*, is given a table with the characteristics of the service in relation to its marketing implications and positioning strategies.

#### 3.1 Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning

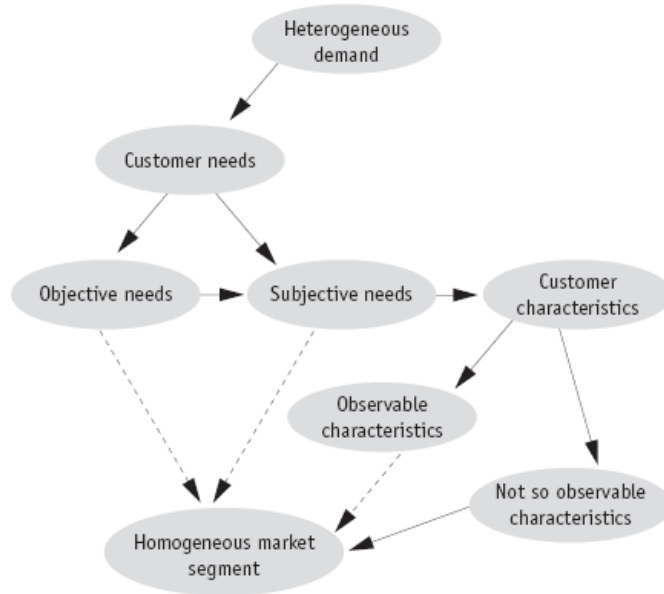
*Ruskin (1999)* highlighted that there is a previous strategic element to the marketing mix, the combination of (a) segmentation, (b) targeting, and (c) positioning. In other words, it is necessary first to divide the market place into homogeneous groups of customers, in order to identify and choose which of these groups will be focused and finally position the service in order to attract them.

According to *Sotiriadou (2011)*, the target group of candidates for the specific programme had the following characteristics. They should: (a) either have a Business or IT-related academic background, (b) have small professional experience, (c) preferably be recent graduates, (d) be employed in middle-level managerial positions, and (e) be hybrid professionals referring to technology, innovation and entrepreneurship sectors. It is true that the Computer Science Department, which runs the programme, had identified a need, which came across changes that acknowledged by European Union and supported from various frameworks (*Sotiriadou, 2011; Hatzia Apostolou, 2011*). To be more specific, innovation with the effective use of technology in order to foster entrepreneurship is the next model of entrepreneurialism and differentiation that Europe encourages versus other global poles, such as BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and USA.

Actually the introduction of this new programme (MSc in Business Management & Technology), aimed to redefine the market place, if could be used such term, and to trigger young managers to cultivate their entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, it succeeded in to get in a niche market which was early recognised as a high-promising one. Furthermore, there was a gap in the market, since no similar programme existed. As *Ruskin (1999)* stated, to make a successful segmentation there must be three conditions:

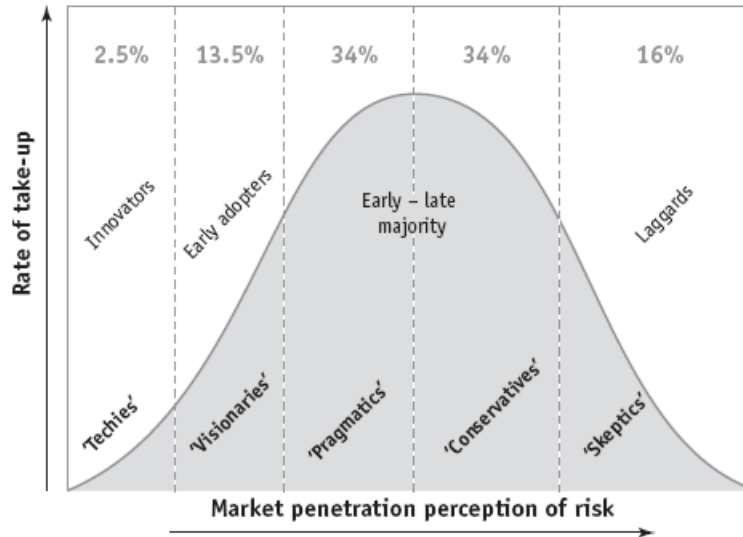
1. to have a gap in the market (unsatisfied needs);
2. to have a market in that gap (large enough for viability);
3. to be able to communicate with the segment;

Below is given an interesting cascade diagram which illustrates briefly the strategies for segmenting a market.



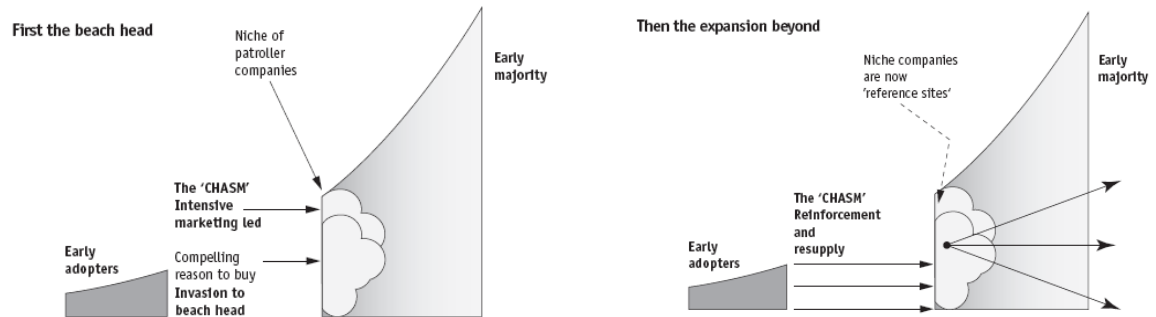
**Figure 2. A cascade diagram of various strategies for segmenting a market**  
 (Source: Ruskin-Brown, Ian (1999) *Mastering Marketing*. Second edition, Chapter 3, p. 76.)

A segmentation strategy for services is different than products. Again *Ruskin (1999)* presented an interesting approach which could be taken into account in the present case of an academic programme.



**Figure 3. Technology adoption curve, as a psychographic segmentation base**  
 (Source: Ruskin-Brown, Ian (1999) *Mastering Marketing*. Second edition, Chapter 3, p. 83.)

Since the programme runs only for three years, it is considered that it is still in its early position in terms of entering the certain market of SEE. Actually, adapting *Ruskin (1999)*, we identify that it is in the phase of experiencing the major “chasm” among the early adopters and early majority. Below is given a figure which illustrates this crossing path from one side to the other.



**Figure 4. Strategy for crossing the chasm**

(Source: Ruskin-Brown, Ian (1999) *Mastering Marketing*. Second edition, Chapter 3, p. 86.)

The early majority, - which according to figure 3 represents a crucial part of the market - includes another subset, the “patrollers”. A niche marketer, such as the Marketing Department of the College, which promotes the programme, is dedicated to identify individuals and companies among the group of early majority that are expected to support in the invasion to the big part of the market.

Such strategy helps in diffusing innovation and activates a series of links in the community that operate as intruders and opinion shapers. To be more specific, the Department has already planned to (a) identify, (b) target, and (c) select such entities (individuals and companies) in all South-East European (SEE) markets in order to bring them closer to the philosophy of the programme.

In terms of targeting, there is a standard series of questions which responds each time to the crucial decision of entering in a market, or not. Each question, according to *Ruskin (1999)* needs to be weighted accordingly.

- What is the market worth now?
- What could it be worth in the future?
- Where is the market on its life cycle?
- How competitive will the company be in the new market?
- What are the barriers to entry (old and new markets)?

We could add though in the above, a sixth element and this is “how effectively can we communicate our service to the target”. Despite this, there is a College general policy to apply niche marketing. As *Blythe (2005)* highlighted, this is usually single segment concentrated marketing. The niche marketer concentrates on being the very best within a single tiny segment. Thus, targeting is ultimately bended to this strategy. Nevertheless, achieving the right targeting policy is essential while doing niche marketing, as false decisions may easily out-market the service.

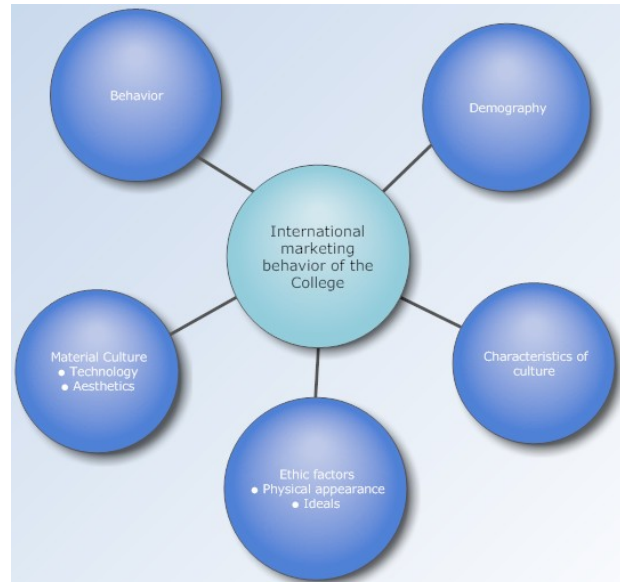
Regarding positioning, this is closely related to perceptions. On this occasion, it describes how potential students perceive the specific programme and in which position they have placed it in their perceptual map. On the other side, this defines College’s decision to identify which position the specific programme wants to occupy in the specific segment.

*Kotler and Armstrong (2006)* introduced that a product’s position is the way a product is defined by consumers on important attributes and the place the product occupies in consumers’ minds relative to competing products. Another interesting approach was that of *Keegan and Green (2003)* who defined positioning as the process of developing strategies for “staking out turf” or “filling a slot” in the mind of target customers.

This statement of course involves the sense of implanting in the segment the unique and attractive attributes of the academic programme. On the same manner, we admit that College shows a global marketing attitude, as it continuously cultivates a global consumer culture positioning, among its members and potential students, meaning the development of a unique strong identity of belonging to a transnational community culture. This could be considered as a strong competitive advantage among others, towards competition.

### 3.2 Consumer Buying Behaviour

According to Cox (2004), consumer behaviour drives the development of marketing mixes. The College perceived early the cultural diversity of SEE markets and focused on developing skills and competences in all levels, in order to cope with this challenge. The next figure illustrates the strategic factors that comprised the marketing behaviour of the College as adapted from Bradley (2005).



**Figure 5. Cultural determinants of College's marketing behavior**

Furthermore, it was identified that three factors were crucial and seemed that formed the consumer behaviour, which in this case, corresponds to the candidate's choice for education. These are: (a) personal factors, (b) psychological factors, and (c) social factors or reference groups.

### 3.3 The Seven Ps

#### 3.3.1 Product (Service)

As mentioned in the programme's handbook (*Computer Science Department, 2010*), it aims to prepare students for management roles in any type of organization. This is achieved through examining cutting-edge and emerging ICT (Information & Communication Technologies) that enable and support business processes and innovation. In addition, through the combination with a strategic, management-focused approach, the MSc in Business Management & Technology intends to build the necessary knowledge and skills that drive effective strategic management. Moreover, it enables students to become innovative business leaders in today's technology-driven and global competitive marketplace. To be more precise, according to *Hatzia Apostolou (2011)*, the programme aims to develop hybrid skills in order for the students to cope with changes through innovation. Moreover, it requires critical ability from the students in order to integrate the knowledge derived from the modules.

The curriculum of the programme is given right below:

<b>Module name</b>	<b>Credits</b>
<i>Entrepreneurship and Innovation</i>	15
<i>Knowledge Society and ICT Policy</i>	15
<i>ICT for Strategic Management</i>	15
<i>Managing Knowledge-Driven ICT Projects</i>	15
<i>Managing Strategic Change</i>	15
<i>Inter-networked Business Enterprises</i>	15
<i>Knowledge Technologies for Innovation</i>	15
<i>Innovation Management and New Product Development</i>	15
<i>Research Methods</i>	15
<i>Dissertation</i>	45

In addition, there is a “Bridging Unit” which aims to prepare and synchronize students from different disciplines. This takes place prior to the first module and affects positively the students since it introduces them in the philosophy of what follows (*Hatziapostolou, 2011*).

In brief, approaching the academic programme as a service offered to students, this aims:

- To provide an innovative, multidisciplinary and rigorous curriculum in business management and innovation;
- To develop knowledge and skills to tackle management challenges and seize business opportunities;
- To enable students to identify, assess, and communicate the strategic competitive advantages enabled by information technology;
- To provide students with an understanding of communication and information professional and ethical issues in society and knowledge-based economies;
- To expose students to the major trends of globalization and technology integration that are shaping the business environment;

Such aims are performed through the teaching and learning methods, which are considered part of the service experience and besides that, is an integral part of the educational “product”.

Student learning experience consists of a variety of teaching and learning methods, which consequently defines the service’s framework and its diversity and mentality.

The programme utilises the following methods:

• Small classes	• Laboratory classes	• Videos
• Interactive lectures	• Presentations	• Case studies
• Extra classes	• Student conferences	• Simulations
• Guest speakers	• Debate sessions	• Role playing
• Panel lecturing	• Real life projects	• Collaborative work
• Individual tutoring	• Company visits	• On-line structured activities

Moreover, the service includes a number of extracurricular activities which include formation of College Academic Clubs of various interests and participation in associations with scientific and professional background.

### 3.3.2 Place (Distribution)

The programme is currently offered in three cities (a) Thessaloniki, Greece, (b) Tirana, Albania and (c) Sofia, Bulgaria. Although originally it was offered in Thessaloniki, last year the Department decided to host the programme in the two other cities, through cooperation with reputable local Academic Institutions. On this occasion, the College managed to bring locally the opportunity for candidates to get this service experience and get advantage of acquiring one of the best degrees while living and working on their base country.

### 3.3.3 Price

Although education is an inelastic service, this corresponds mostly to the public and government-funded one. The private education is elastic and especially in Greece is a monopolistic oligopoly. Services that include a pro-longed experience, as in the case of education, incorporate a number of hidden costs which preserve high costs.

The College follows a combination of price skimming and psychological pricing. This strategy requires keeping close track on any changes in competition and observing students behaviour as potential customers. Also, it is needed to cultivate your strong brand and inspire high quality of your services. This is called prestige pricing (*Blythe, 2005*) and directed the College to be the price leader.

In addition the College offers a variety of Scholarships based on application’s credentials as well as a number of fee-waivers. This is due to the price-adjustments pricing policy it follows, according to circumstances and changes in the environment. Such price adjustments are discounts and allowances. Moreover, for alumni that decide to continue their studies in another programme

there are certain discounts which fit to the so-called quantity discounts pricing policy (Kotler et al., 2005).

#### 3.3.4 Promotion

The College does not follow the same promotion strategy for each market. As a result, the marcom tools used are diversified according to the local market's attributes. Birnin and Bowman (2007) named that strategy as marketing mix regionalization or clustering. Clustering is a generic strategy which compromises with localization and standardization, two other generic strategies. Localization is suitable for customer-based marketing strategies, while standardization may accommodate cost-based competition and innovation-based strategies.

According to Kapnopoulou (2011), the Marketing Manager of the College, the advertising policy is to focus mostly in the College name rather than specifying in a programme. For that reason, more budgets are dedicated to advertising media that promote the whole list of academic programmes offered in each market. Under circumstances, it is possible to promote separately an academic programme, mostly when it is introduced for the first time. Besides that, this policy is related to literature where, as Carpenter and Lehmann (1985) stated, the advertising of a service strengthens the overall brand name attraction.

The Marketing Department do focus on AIDA model (Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action) and such actions are combined with investment on almost all promotional tools (PENCILS: Publications, Events, News, Community involvement activities, Identity media, Lobbying activities, Social responsibility activities and Social media and networking).

According to Grove et al. (2000) services experience could be compared with the elements of a theatrical production, since human factor plays a significant role in this framework. Education, demonstrates the characteristics of a service experience. Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) researched the 7Ps model, which beyond the 4Ps introduces the elements of participants, physical evidence and process. Booms and Bitner (1981) presented many years earlier, the 7Ps model especially modified for services where special emphasis given in the human factor.

#### 3.3.5 People (Participants)

People are the only significant P that points the difference between tangibility and intangibility in the service marketing. As people, in this case, we may consider academic staff which delivers the modules but also the students who participate. In education, such as in other "high contact" services, there is a simultaneous production and consumption. This, by itself, creates a human-centred system which influences the perceptions of students by defining a quality framework.

Furthermore, the administrative staff is considered as participants, since they contribute to the maintenance and support of the environment in order for the teaching and learning methods to take place. Also the Computer Science Department which offers the programme, utilises joint forces from internal permanent academic staff, external visiting lecturers from industry, alumni and other experts. The College invests in its staff continuously through a specific scheme which among others includes: (a) encouragement of people to participate in joint European programmes, (b) organising of conferences and publications, (c) research, (d) sabbaticals, (e) support of academic development of its staff etc.

#### 3.3.6 Process

The academic and administrative procedures that define the educational framework of the programme may be considered as the process. Among other procedures, the Department offers a pastoral support to the students of the programme which is consisted of a combination of: (a) tutoring, (b) advising, (c) chat sessions through an internal on-line system, (d) skype office hours and (e) intensive dissertation supervision (Sotiriadou, 2011).

Internally the Department applies continuous academic staff moderation in order to enhance communication among staff and students. Furthermore, new digital education platforms are introduced for improving the academic process (Claroline, Elluminate, etc.)

The above are not simply processes but part of the offered experience to the students. Actually, these are elements of the augmented service, which brings value-added benefits and creates a sustainable competitive advantage for the institution.

#### 3.3.7 Physical Presence or evidence

As physical presence, could be considered all tangible goods that facilitate the run of the programme in all markets of SEE. Specifically, this refers to the environment that the service experience takes place and provides the instruments, accessories, academic tools, premises etc.



for the performance and the implementation of the programme. The College offers the master programme in high quality fully-equipped premises in all countries, as this is considered part of the educational service, according to its philosophy and strategy.

The effect of location is relative to other marketing factors as well as to the financial flexibility of an organization (*Lai and Poon, 2009*). In addition, the physical environment and in extent the place where the studying experience takes place is extremely important and acts as a key service component. Actually, the “servicescape role” in student’s purchase decision process is the ultimate mean which marketers should focus and can build bulk of campaigns upon it (*Hightower et al., 2002*).

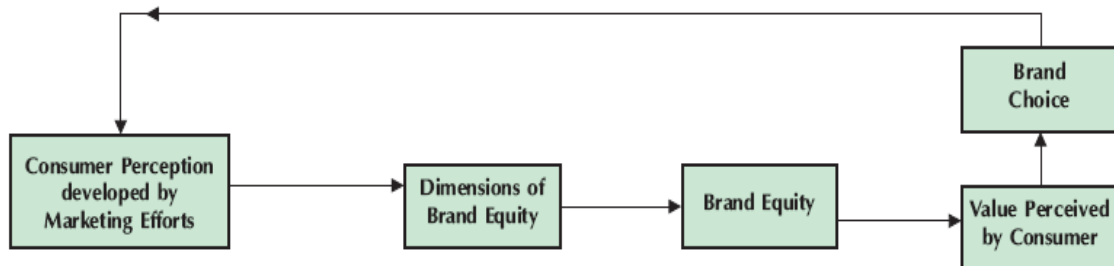
### 3.4 Why the College followed this mix?

The College follows this mix mainly for two reasons. Because it has a strategic plan and mission to work and invest on (a) brand equity, and (b) student loyalty.

Consequently, the marketing mix elements, as described above, were derivatives of strategic choice which the College followed by foreseeing, on the one side, the value of early investment in the dimensions of brand equity while on the other side, perceiving the strong influence of overall customer-student loyalty.

As *Chattopadhyay et al. (2010)* presented in their study, the marketing mix elements are strongly related to the overall brand equity of an organisation. Therefore, College got a competitive advantage through this mix as it provided a framework where “students-customers” spread a positive word-of-mouth, which in return is considered a determinant of brand equity. Besides that, word-of-mouth could be considered, by itself, as a marketing mix element, impacting the equity and choice of final customers-students. Moreover, in services marketing, like in education experience, this could work more effective versus advertising frequency.

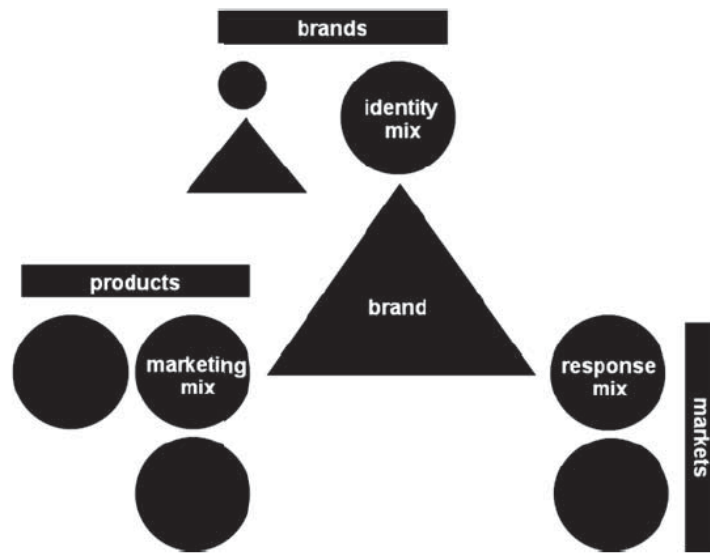
Actually, the College follows a model, as given below, which defines the environment of repeating customers and in extent a repeating value.



**Figure 6. Conceptual Framework of Brand Equity**

(Source: Chattopadhyay, Tanmay (2010) Marketing Mix Elements Influencing Brand Equity and Brand Choice. *Vikalpa-The Journal for Decision Makers*, 35(3), p. 68.)

Another important study on branding of *Lencaster and Corte-Real (2010)* introduced an innovative model which actually is a three-pillar approach that defines the three dimensions of the brand for a company. In the next figure we present it. It is an attempt to describe the different components of the brand and their interactions.



**Figure 7. The Brand Triangle**

(Source: Lencastre, Paulo de and Corte-Real, Ana (2010) One, two, three: A practical brand anatomy. *Brand Management*, 17(6), pp. 409.)

In the same manner, a clear orientation in cultivating a customer loyalty, proved to be a comparative advantage which besides that, discourages competition to advance. Furthermore, according to *Hu (2009)*, an aggressive marketing mix especially in the elements of price and promotion increases customer loyalty. In addition, a training plan for employees focusing in increasing the service quality may be proved not enough unless it incorporates a strong dedication to promote customer loyalty. To achieve that, human capital of the College is recommended to adopt a more attentive personal profile.

However, the continuous efforts both in brand equity and student loyalty, seems to provide a certain framework which is used to comply with future uncertainties, in terms of market evolution. Such strategic choices, has proved throughout the years, that embraced uncertainty rather than avert changes and risk.

Summing up the description of the marketing mix adopted by the College, it is clear that it has a global strategic attitude, which derives from all the mix elements as well as the reasons of adopting this mix as explained in the previous paragraphs. This high quality of the mix enhances performance and this is done also through an extensive export planning (*Shoham and Kropp, 1998*). Therefore, the College maintains a strong channel of communication among its markets and segments which reveals possible premium opportunities.

Furthermore, there are elements of internal marketing which are present to foster the service quality culture. The College and the Department of Computer Science follows a five-factor benchmarking to identify the level of service quality: (a) reliability, (b) assurance, (c) tangibles, (d) empathy, and (e) responsiveness (*Alexandris et al., 2002*).

According to *Chen and Green (2009)* marketing mix, brand equity and loyalty are strictly linked and interrelated so as to interact and define the broader marketing plan.

#### **4. PROPOSALS ON THE MARKETING MIX**

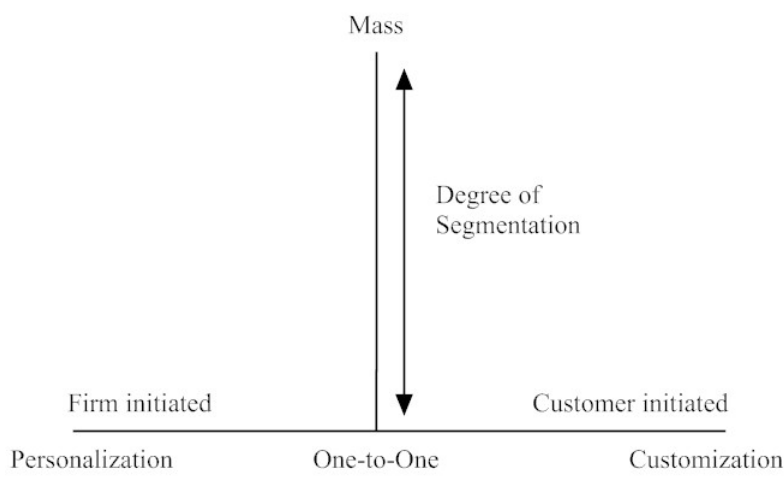
The aim in this section is not to suggest changes in the established marketing mix, described in previous sections. On the contrary, through literature review and empirical analysis, followed by the interviews of the staff members involved, it is considered more valuable to reveal a number of tools that could help the Marketing department of the institution to embrace uncertainty through scenario planning. Therefore, through digging-up of literature and identifying current weaknesses, the marketing mix could be flexibly adapted according to changes.

A synthesis of SWOT and PESTEL analysis, continuously identifying changes and serve scenario-planning, could contribute in the selection of appropriate marketing mix for each academic programme including the one in current study. As *Arora et al. (2008)* stated, the tailoring of a firm's

marketing mix to the individual customer is the essence of one-to-one marketing. Furthermore, as *Carpenter and Lehmann (1985)* asserted, there is always a way to gain significant new insights in investigating the impact of marketing mix in terms of competition and market structure. It is necessary for a firm to develop a marketing mix variables model, which should be used to identify the changes in the environment and feedback the next mix ingredients.

Providing education is an experience which includes not only academic advancement for the student, but cultural enrichment, as well as a building personality framework. Furthermore, this experience has strong characteristics of variety, diversity and daily differentiations, which turns it to a challenge. This, by itself is an integrated value chain for the student, which according to *Birnik and Bowman (2007)*, should be researched in order for the institution to understand the relationship between the student's experience and the operational delivery.

Technology on the other hand, through recent tools can help the College to acquire a full and updated profile for each student from the starting status as a candidate throughout the duration of his/her studies. Such choice could contribute in the application of both personalization and customization as a marketing practice. According to *Arora et al. (2008)* the services industry has made ample use of personalization. Below is given an illustration of the relation among personalization and customization in terms of degree segmentation.



**Figure 8. Understanding personalization and customization**

(Source: Arora, N. et al. (2008) Putting one-to-one marketing to work: Personalization, customization and choice. *Journal of Marketing Letters*, (19), p. 307.)

Moreover, *Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992)* have introduced a revised Marketing Mix which emphasizes in the communication. Actually this alternative mix focuses on personalization, since it is built on the determination and judgement of marketing instruments to be used according to consumer's behaviour. It is considered significant for this study to give this revised mix in *Appendix F*.

Personalization is expected to create a higher sense of student's satisfaction although it hides two weaknesses for the College and these are the issue of privacy and the high cost to maintain such a system for attracting candidates and keeping track of their personal characteristics.

Besides that, Relationship Marketing, although a questionable dominant paradigm, correlates personalization with organizational structure. On the other side, it identifies a sustainable functionality of marketing as a driving force owed to the management of relationships (*Harker and Egan, 2006*). If such paradigm will be adopted, it is expected to increase competitiveness and unpack the so-called relationships' "black box" usually among staff and customers.

In *Appendix G*, is given a table which illustrates the contextual factors that influence marketing mix standardization. This is due to fact that standardization benefits organizations to acquire clarity on their strategic objectives and a more effective decision process. Likewise, the decision of adopting higher marketing mix standardization versus a lower one could be supported by the model as given in *Appendix H*. This model helps marketing department to establish a global planning process which is important for further actions (*Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999*).

A thorough analysis on the triangle of Students-Competitors-College's strengths should be coordinated in terms of identifying which is the most advantageous mix element and investigate how its impact could be reinforced and multiplied. An orchestrated effort of combining the other elements could be done in order to highlight and reveal the specific's element features.

To achieve ubiquity, is questionable, since in education it might not be of a strategic choice. But, in any case, a fluid marketing mix adapted to ubiquity, implies responses to dynamic changes and sustainability for the programme. As Cox (2004) verified, a marketing mix is reactive as the organization tries to adapt its existing services to the demands of a ubiquitous market. In the end, the organization acts proactively since it experiences a pressure for being innovative in its effort to carve out marketing niches.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to Graham (2008), all marketing tactics are temporary while the marketing itself is essentially experimental. Consequently, marketing mix is fluid and most probably requires a quiver of tactics rather than a standard set of procedures. Based on fact that the only expert is the student, the hype tension may direct to disorientation. On the other hand, focus on real needs, not necessarily high-levelled ones, could direct out of sidelines.

Positioning a service is more difficult than positioning a product because of the need to communicate vague and intangible benefits (Blankson and Kalafatis, 1999).

Education is a service experience which incorporates its own attributes. Current epoch, actually a transitional one, where the dominant idea is the restructuring, full of uncertainty, education needs to define its own paradigm. The marketing mix needs to serve a standard form of solutions to problems. In such a case, it would be widely accepted as an innovative perspective giving value and creating opportunities both ways for students and the College.

The proposed scheme of personalization and one-to-one marketing throughout the studying experience of the student, although costly, is expected to reinforce both student loyalty and re-capitalize brand equity. Moreover if used in combination with the rest of strategic elements already discussed in this study such as the SWOT analysis, the PEST framework, will make the College and the other two Departments involved, capable of keeping up with tracks and changes in advance.

According to Fisher (1991), service marketers must have a good understanding of their special competitive situation to achieve long-term competitive advantage.

Furthermore, current trends in competition encrypt a new challenge. Students as consumers are not simply participating but they are involved in the education experience. Therefore, should be serviced under their multiple roles of consumer and competitor as well.

Also, may be the time to transfer the commercial marketing tactics to a social marketing framework, since in our case, where education is the object, this could be adapted more easily. Since the core concept of marketing is exchanging of values between two parties (Kotler, 1972), this is an opportunity for the College to ingrain its marketing mix elements in all levels with a long-term relationship approach. Such a move is expected to create growth for the College through interaction and relationships concern.

This study, as stated earlier, attempts to reveal with the help of literature review a number of tools that could be adopted by the College Management team in terms of marketing planning for the specific academic programme, and for others as well.

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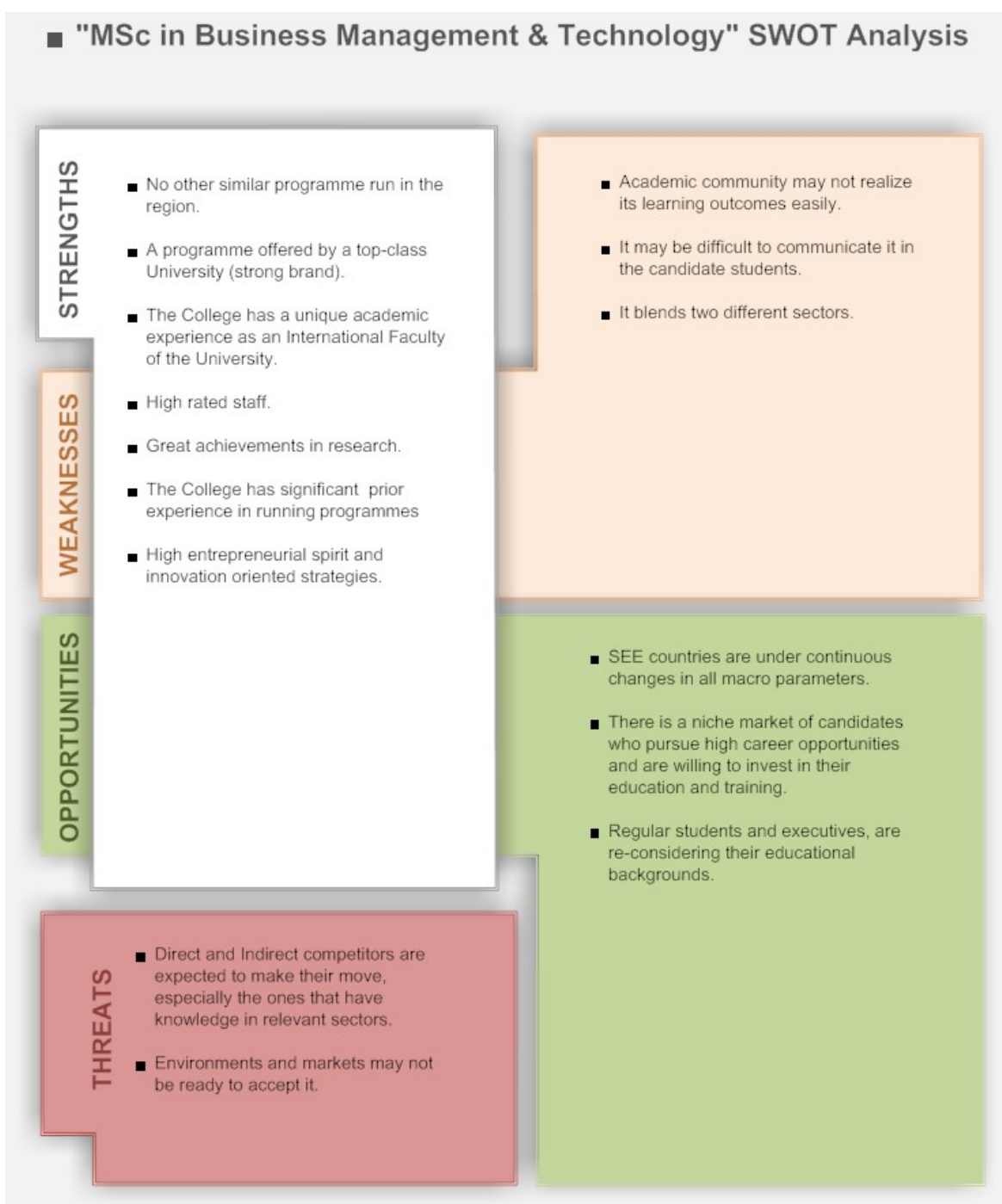
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## APPENDIX A

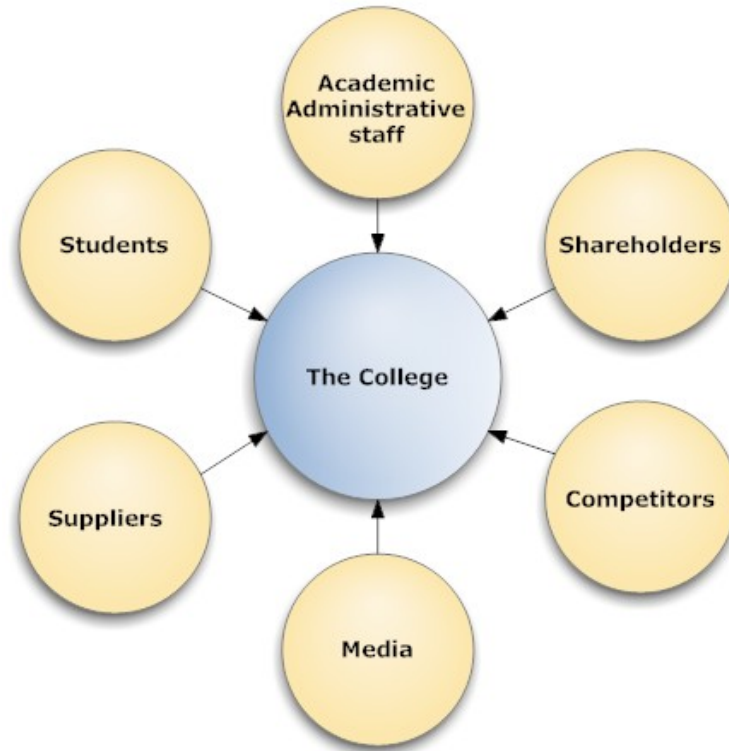
### SWOT Analysis of the “MSc in Business Management & Technology”



## APPENDIX B

### The Micro-Environment of the College

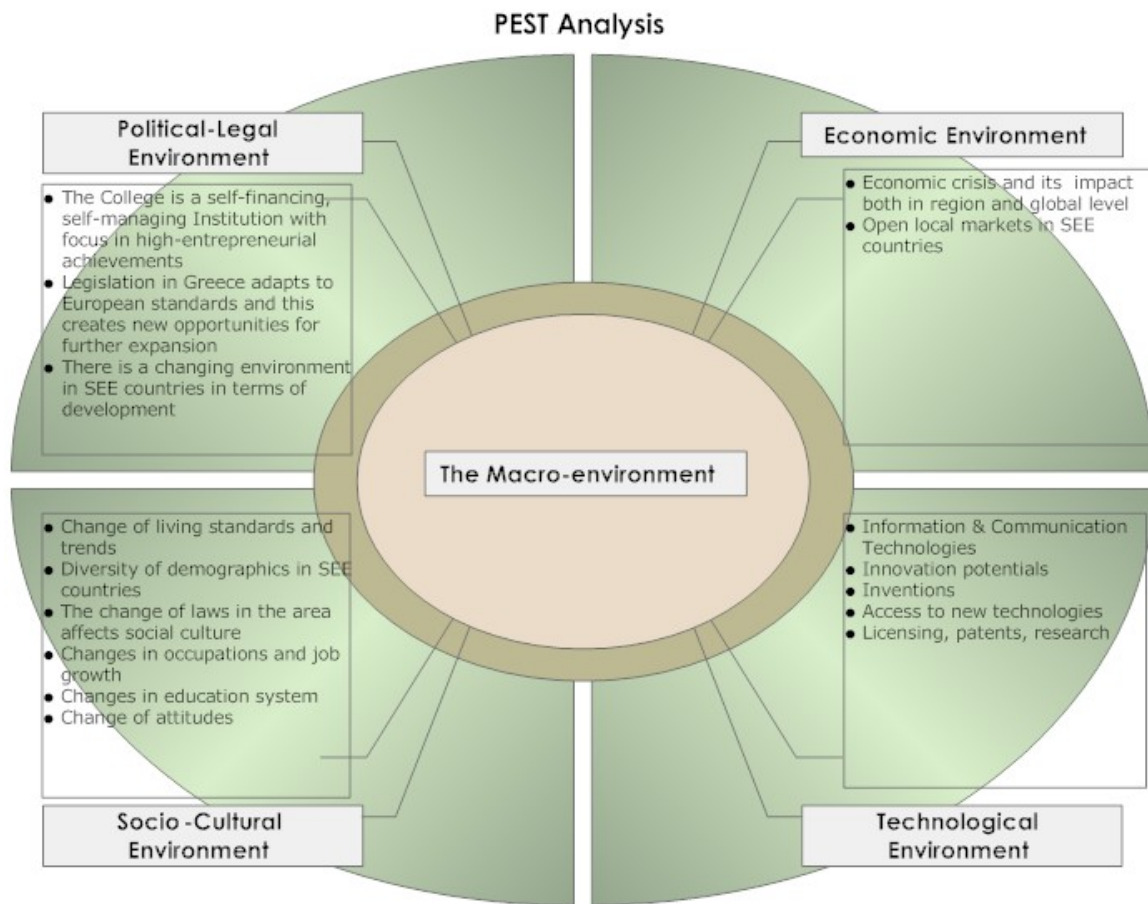
#### The Micro Environment





## APPENDIX C

### The Macro-Environment of the College (PEST Analysis)



## APPENDIX D

### Review of Services Marketing Literature (taxonomy)

Author(s)	Arguments	Proposition
Booms and Bitner 1981	Recognizing the special character of the services as products, they demonstrated the importance of Environmental factors (Physical Evidence) influencing the quality perception. They included the Participants (personnel and customers) and the Process of service delivery as the additional Marketing Mix factors.	The Services Marketing Mix includes next to the 4Ps three more Ps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Participants</li> <li>o Physical Evidence</li> <li>o Process</li> </ul>
Cowell 1984	Three aspects justifying the revision of the Marketing mix framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the original mix was developed for manufacturing companies</li> <li>- empirical evidence suggesting that marketing practitioners in the service sector find the marketing mix not being inclusive enough for their needs</li> </ul>	<i>Adopts the framework proposed by Booms and Bitner</i>
Brunner 1989	The 4P Marketing mix elements must be extended to include more factors affecting the services marketing thus becoming mixes themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Concept Mix</li> <li>o Cost Mix</li> <li>o Channels Mix</li> <li>o Communication Mix</li> </ul>
Ruston and Carson 1989	The unique characteristics of the services- intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability- make the control of the marketing process, using the generalized tools of marketing, inadequate.	New instruments and concepts must be developed to explain and manage the services intangibility
Fryar 1991	Segmentation and differentiation is the basis of successful positioning services. Furthermore the personal relationship with the customer and the quality of the service are important elements of the services Marketing.	The Marketing of services requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Differentiation based on segmentation and positioning</li> <li>o Customer contact</li> <li>o Unique vision on quality</li> </ul>
Heuvel 1993	Interaction between the one delivering the service and the customer is very important and has direct effect on the service quality and quality perception. The Product element can be better demonstrated as having two components, the primary and secondary service elements as well as the process.	The Services Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Personnel</li> <li>o Product</li> <li>o Place</li> <li>o Price</li> <li>o Promotion</li> </ul>
Doyle 1994	While recognizing that the content of the 4Ps in the service sector is somehow different from that of the tangibles he does accept the 4Ps as the elements of the services marketing mix. He identifies special difficulties in Promotion and Place preferring to replace them by the terms Communication and Distribution.	Services Marketing Mix: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Product</li> <li>o Price</li> <li>o Communication</li> <li>o Distribution</li> </ul>
Melewar, Saunders 2000	The Corporate Visual Identity System (CVIS) is the basis of the corporate differentiation and the core of the company's visual identity.	A new P must be added in the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix (and the 3Ps of the Services Mix) namely the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Publications</li> </ul>
English 2000	The traditional Marketing has never been an effective tool for health services marketing.	A new framework emerges, emphasizing the 4Rs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Relevance</li> <li>o Response</li> <li>o Relationships</li> <li>o Results</li> </ul>
Grove et al., 2000	Services Marketing can be compared to a theatrical production. How the service is performed is as important as what is performed. Critical factor is therefore the customer experience. The traditional Marketing Mix does not adequately capture the special circumstances that are present when marketing a service product.	Four strategic theatrical elements constitute the Services Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Actors</li> <li>o Audience</li> <li>o Setting</li> <li>o Performance</li> </ul> <p>These elements must be added to the extended services Marketing Mix model of Booms en Bitner.</p>
Beckwith 2001	Marketing services in a changing world requires focusing on increasing the customer satisfaction and rejecting old product paradigms and marketing fallacies.	The four keys of Modern (services) Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Price</li> <li>o Brand</li> <li>o Packaging</li> <li>o Relationships</li> </ul>

(Source: Constantinides, E (2006) The Marketing Mix Revisited: Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, (22), pp. 418-410.

## APPENDIX E

### Service Characteristics and their implications for marketing and positioning strategies

Characteristics of service	Marketing implications	Positioning tactics and strategies
Intangibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sampling difficulty</li> <li>Strain on promotional element of marketing mix</li> <li>No patents possible</li> <li>Difficult to judge price and quality in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on benefits and attributes</li> <li>Increase tangibility of service</li> <li>Use brand names</li> <li>Use personalities to personalise service.</li> <li>Develop reputation</li> </ul>
Inseparability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires presence of producer</li> <li>Direct sale</li> <li>Limited scale of operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn to work in larger groups</li> <li>Work faster</li> <li>Train more service providers</li> </ul>
Heterogeneity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard depends on who and when provided</li> <li>Difficult to assure quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careful personnel selection and training</li> <li>Ensure standards are monitored</li> <li>Pre-package service</li> <li>Emphasise bespoke features</li> </ul>
Perishability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot be stored</li> <li>Problem with demand fluctuations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match supply and demand effectively (e.g. reduce prices during off-peak)</li> </ul>
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer has access to but not ownership of service activity or facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress advantages of non-ownership (e.g. permit easier payment system)</li> </ul>
Standardisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty in consistency of service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create uniformity. Instil company's ethos in personnel</li> </ul>

(Source: Blankson, Charles and Kalafatis, P. Stavros (1999) Issues and Challenges in the positioning of service brands: a review. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 8(2), p. 108.)

## APPENDIX F

## An improved classification of the Marketing Mix

Marketing Mix	Product Mix	Price Mix	Distribution Mix	Communication		
				Mass Communication Mix	Personal Communication Mix	Publicity Mix
<b>Basic Mix</b>	Basic Product Mix	Basic Price Mix	Basic Distribution Mix	Basic Mass Communication Mix	Basic Personal Communication Mix	Basic Publicity Mix
	Instruments that mainly aim at the satisfaction of the prospective exchange party's needs	Instruments that mainly fix the size and the way of payment exchanged for the goods or services	Instruments that mainly determine the intensity and manner of how the goods or services will be made available	Non-personal communication efforts that mainly aim at announcing the offer or maintaining awareness and knowledge about it; evoking or maintaining favorable feelings and removing barriers to wanting	Personal communication efforts that mainly aim at announcing the offer or maintaining awareness and knowledge about it; evoking or maintaining favorable feelings and removing barriers to wanting	Efforts that aim at inciting a third party (persons and authorities) to favorable communication about the offer
	<i>e.g.: product characteristics options, assortment, brand name, packaging, quantity, factory guarantee</i>	<i>e.g.: list price, usual terms of payment, usual discounts, terms of credit, long-term savings campaigns</i>	<i>e.g.: different types of distribution channels, density of the distribution system, trade relation mix (policy of margins, terms of delivery, etc.) merchandising advise</i>	<i>e.g.: theme-advertising in various media, permanent exhibitions, certain forms of sponsoring</i>	<i>e.g.: amount and type of selling, personal remunerations</i>	<i>e.g.: press bulletins, press conferences, tours by journalists</i>
<b>Promotion Mix</b>	Product Promotion Mix	Price Promotion Mix	Distribution Promotion Mix	Mass Communication Promotion Mix	Personal Communication Promotion Mix	Publicity Promotion Mix
	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic product mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic price mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic distribution mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic mass communication mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic personal communication mix during relatively short periods of time	Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic publicity mix during relatively short periods of time
	<i>e.g.: economy packs, 3-for-the-price-of-2 deals etc.; temporary luxury options on a car at the price of its standard model</i>	<i>e.g.: exceptionally favorable price, end-of-season sales, exceptionally favorable terms of payment and credit, short-term savings campaigns, temporary discounts, coupons</i>	<i>e.g.: extra point of purchase material, trade promotions such as buying allowances, sales contests, etc.; temporary increase of the number of distribution points</i>	<i>e.g.: action advertising, contests, sweepstakes, samples, premiums, trade shows or exhibitons</i>	<i>e.g.: temporary demonstrations, sales-force promotions such as sales-force contests etc.</i>	<i>e.g.: all measures to stimulate positive publicity about a sales promotion action</i>

(Source: Waterschoot, Van Walter and Van Den Bulte, Christophe (1992) The 4P Classification of the Marketing Mix Revisited. *Journal of Marketing*, 56, p. 90)

## APPENDIX G

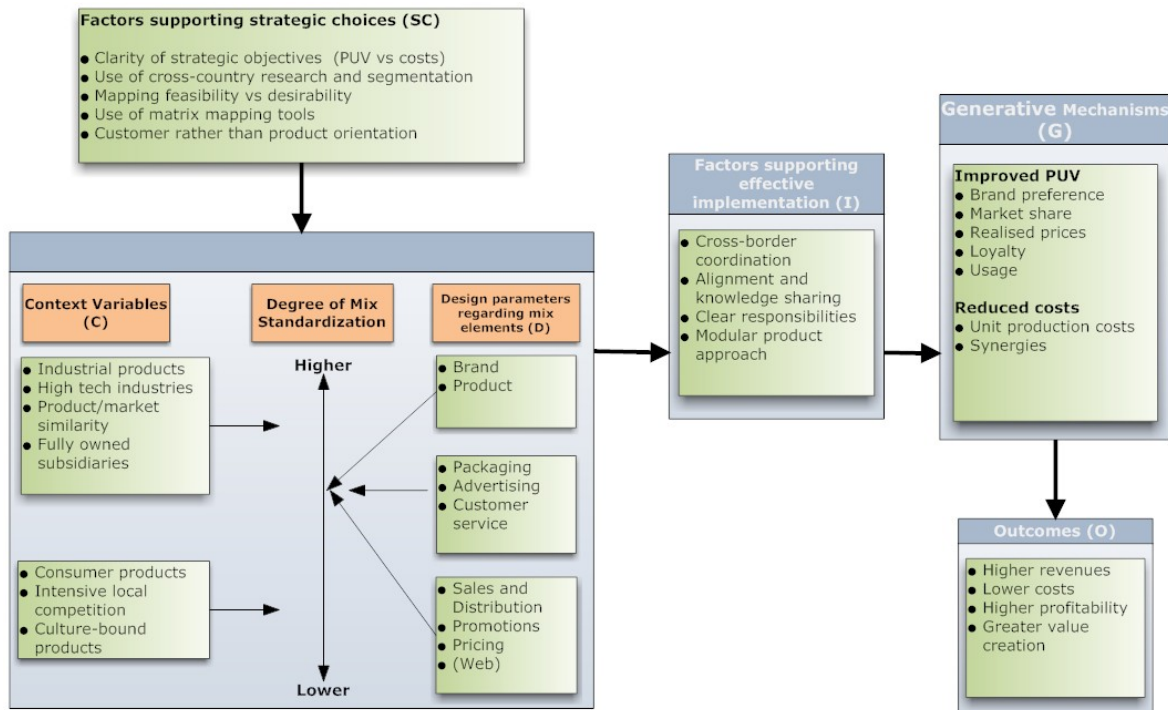
### Contextual factors that influence the Marketing Mix Standardization

	Stronger evidence	Weaker evidence
<b>More standardization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial products</li> <li>• High-tech products</li> <li>• Market similarities</li> <li>• Products in same stage in PLC</li> <li>• Fully owned subsidiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential products</li> <li>• Luxury products</li> <li>• Indirect entry modes</li> <li>• Parent and subsidiary have similar competitive positions</li> <li>• High degree of communication between parent and subsidiary</li> <li>• Foreign operations centralized in an international division</li> <li>• Strategy based on either (a) cost-based competition or (b) product-innovation oriented</li> <li>• Centralization in decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Less standardization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer products</li> <li>• High local competitive intensity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products used at home</li> <li>• Culture bound products</li> <li>• Direct entry modes</li> <li>• Local in-country production</li> <li>• Customer-based strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Inconclusive</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size of local market</li> <li>• Country of origin of parent company</li> <li>• International experience of parent</li> </ul>

(Source: Birnik, Andreas and Bowman, Cliff (2007) Marketing Mix standardization in multinational corporations: A review of the evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 9(4), p. 311)

## APPENDIX H

### Marketing Mix standardization in multinational corporations: Summary model



(Source: Birnik, Andreas and Bowman, Cliff (2007) Marketing Mix standardization in multinational corporations: A review of the evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 9(4), p. 315)