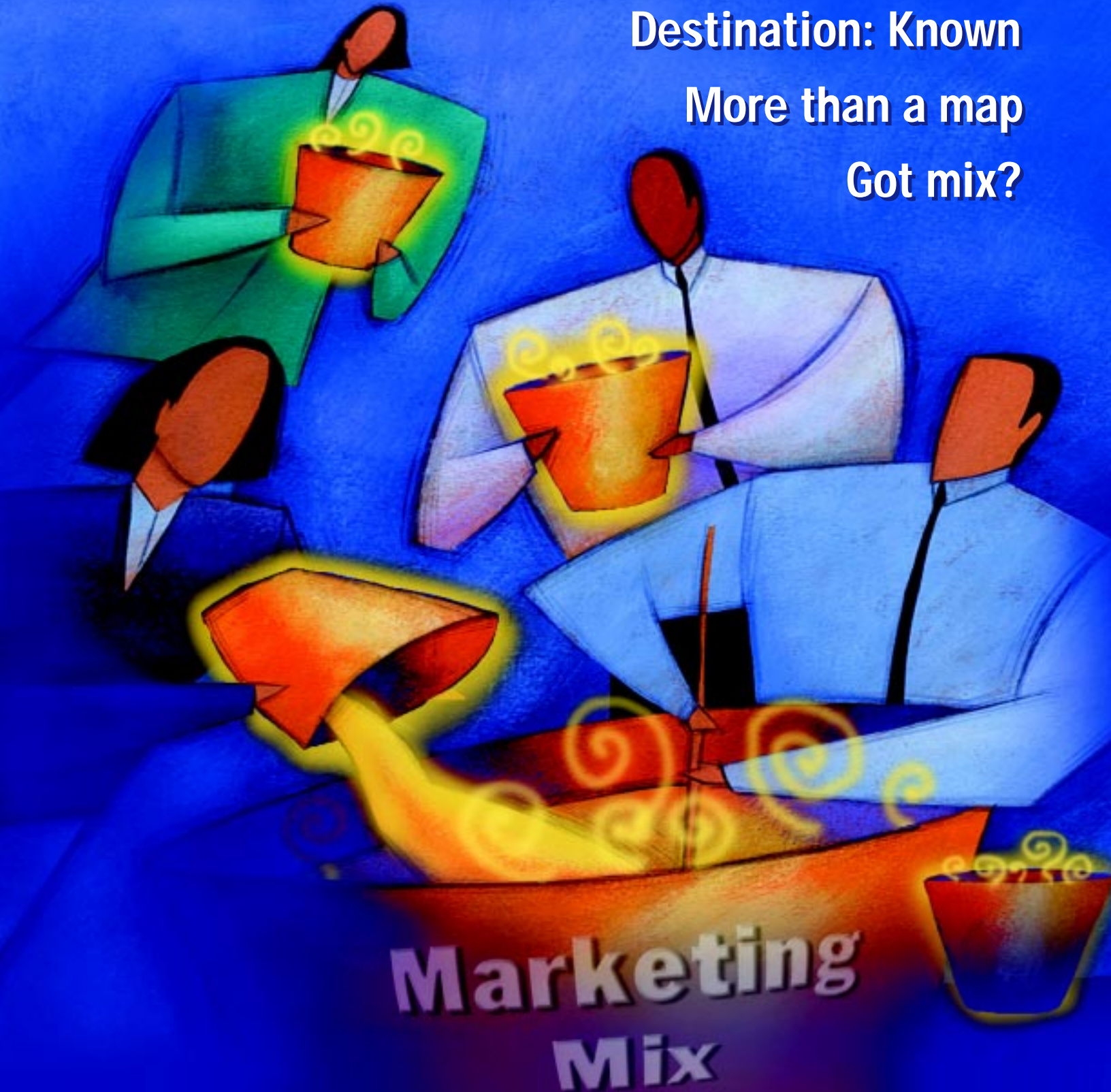


Pick the Mix

Destination: Known

More than a map

Got mix?



**Marketing
Mix**

Going the Distance



Do customers really understand how much preparation goes into connecting them with producers of goods and services? You may be surprised to learn that many purchases wouldn't even occur without marketers' efforts. To achieve satisfying connections, marketers plan *where* they need to go and *how* to get there efficiently. Then, of course, they do what it takes to go the distance.

What does it take for you to go the distance? Let's say you're planning a family vacation....

Choose your destination.

What's the first thing you do? Figure out where you want to go, of course! You determine whether you want to go to the East Coast, Canada, or the Southwest. Then, you decide *specifically* where you want to go—Virginia Beach, Niagara Falls, or Carlsbad Caverns. If your entire family is going on the trip, you might discuss your options. Though you may not agree with each other right away, you eventually reach a common **goal**—*an objective you plan to fulfill*.

So What?

How do you get an item you want? Of course, you might ask your family or friends for it. Or you might save your hard-earned cash until you have enough money to buy it yourself. But what prompts you to GET it—actually buy it? What do you do? Think of some examples.

- You pick up a new camera at the checkout aisle because you saw an advertisement for it.
- You splurge on a new camera because you find out it can be used as a camera, too.
- You try a new sandwich at a local restaurant because you see an advertisement that makes it look tasty.
- You buy two pairs of your favorite jeans—because they're half-price on the sale rack.

Do these circumstances sound familiar? Whether you realize it or not, the conditions of your purchase have been planned way in advance—but not necessarily by you. How do you know about, and have access to, the items you need and want?

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Objectives:



Explain the importance of marketing strategies to business.



Explain the nature of the marketing mix.

Bringing the Right Gear

Does the same strategy work in every situation? Not in today's world. Each marketing situation requires a customized approach—the right gear for the job. To adapt, marketers often adjust, and even *combine*, their strategies to fit their purposes.

You do the same thing when you're planning to visit Florida in June. You take with you items appropriate for your trip: flip-flops, a swimsuit, and sunglasses. However, you take more than just those individual items. You take a *mix* of clothes especially suited for your activities. For hanging out, you take shorts and a T-shirt. For going out in the evening, you take a nice pair of pants and a clean shirt. And, for hitting the gym, you take workout wear.

Just as putting together clothing items yields outfits for going on vacation—so combining marketing elements produces strategies for reaching marketing goals.



Pack your suitcase.

As marketers select the right gear for the job, they make sure they have the right marketing pieces—and in the right combination.

Including the right things. The marketing mix is a *combination of the four elements of marketing—product, price, place, and promotion*. This mix is a unique blend of elements that are valuable individually. Let's take a look at each element.



The Gray Zone

Britney works as a salesperson for Abercrombie & Fitch. Maria works for Victoria's Secret. Both women know that their firms use a controversial marketing strategy: Sex sells. With sexy advertising, each company captures the attention of potential customers—and stamps a clear image of the firm in their minds.

Maria feels that Victoria's Secret is doing the right thing for its products, which make the every-day woman feel beautiful. She thinks that underwear should be handled differently from other clothing. She thinks underwear needs a little bit of sex to get the message across. Maria knows that Victoria's Secret Loom has used talking fruit to sell underwear for years, but she doesn't think that a slightly comedic angle would work for her firm. She isn't worried that kids might see the sexy Victoria's Secret ads—or that some adults may be offended. She believes that her

firm is doing the right thing for its products, which make the every-day woman feel beautiful.

Britney, on the other hand, is not so sure that Abercrombie & Fitch is doing the right thing for its products, which make the every-day woman feel beautiful. She realizes that controversial, sexy advertising certainly grabbed the attention of some customers. But she knows that many who *would* buy her firm's clothing are turned off by the firm's four-face sexuality. Britney really likes Abercrombie's clothing, but she really wishes that her company would tone down the sex. She thinks that kids will get the wrong idea and that the Abercrombie label might come to represent more than it should.

What do you think? Should Victoria's Secret and Abercrombie & Fitch use sex to sell their products? Why or why not? If you were a marketing decision maker at one of these firms, how would you determine which strategy to use?

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Remember your map.

However, it's important for marketers to select a strategy before customizing the marketing mix. If not, it's as if they'd packed for a vacation before deciding which direction to go! Similar to the careful selection of each tactic, choosing the right blend of the marketing mix takes thorough planning.

How does this play out in a company like Target, a growing chain of discount stores? Let's take a look.

When you think of Target, do you think of trendy clothes—or the bull's-eye logo? Whatever comes to mind, Target's *strategy* is to offer discount shopping for the fashionable crowd. In support of this strategy, Target has designed a creative combination of the marketing mix:



- Product**—Target offers both typical household necessities and products *unique* to its stores. Since the firm hires its own designers for some of its product lines, it is impossible for competitors to carry the same brands. This individuality encourages customers to come back for things they won't get anywhere else.
- Price**—Featuring quality products at lower prices, Target offers chic shoppers a refreshing change from higher priced department stores—and from lower quality discount stores. Its prices remain low enough to be considered “discount” but high enough to establish an image of quality.
- Place**—To master efficient distribution, Target is part of an extensive online system to get products from its suppliers—allowing the firm to stock its shelves as professionally as department stores do.
- Promotion**—When customers notice Target's advertisements sporting a cutting-edge image, they can only conclude that *this* discount store accommodates its customers' style requirements.

A unique blend, Target's marketing mix puts together the image of quality and the convenience of discount shopping in a way that few stores have demonstrated. The blend effectively supports Target's strategy of catering to classy discount shoppers.

Summary

The marketing mix is made up of a distinct blend of elements—product, price, place, and promotion—that are valuable individually. Determining the product to sell is the starting point. Finding the right pricing balance involves weighing value and satisfaction for the customer, as well as cost and profit for the firm. Successful distribution (place) ensures a convenient buying experience. And effective promotion uses communication to inform, persuade, or remind customers of the products' benefits. As a unit, the mix elements are interrelated and can be tailored to suit various situations. And, before putting the elements together, marketers select a strategy for reaching their goal.

Marketers know that, en route to their destination, bringing the right gear makes all the difference!

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1. Explain why different strategies are used in different situations.
 2. What is the marketing mix?
 3. As a marketing-mix element, what is product?
 4. As a marketing-mix element, what is price?
 5. As a marketing-mix element, what is place?
 6. As a marketing-mix element, what is promotion?
 7. How do the marketing-mix elements affect each other?
 8. How are strategies important to the marketing mix?

Make It Pay!

Marketing strategies come in all shapes and sizes—because they're customized for each marketing situation. But, in particular, strategies for increasing sales of a *service* may be quite different from strategies used to increase sales of a *good*.

Take the service of a bank, for example. Customers may remain in a bank because of the products it has on its shelves. But if the bank can't offer free samples or free shipping. Instead, it has to shape the marketing mix to include new products, low prices, or more ATM locations. If customers respond with confidence that their money is best served there, the bank has hit its target.

Check out your bank's web site. What strategies and tactics do you think your bank is using to reach its goal?

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