



How the Internet Changed Marketing's "Four Ps"

Product, Price, Place and Promotion have a slightly different meaning

By Sandy Cahill

The traditional "**Four P's**" of marketing - **Product, Price, Place, Promotion** have been our basic guiding principles of marketing. However, their meaning changes slightly when applied to Internet marketing.

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Online, the consumer experiences the **Product** electronically – they see text, images, and multimedia. They can browse through detailed online catalogues which can be even better than brochures, including multimedia applications with audio/video and the ability to see the product in action.

Space is not a constraint on the Internet so we offer consumers an amazingly wide range of products across all categories.

Price strategies have been drastically changed by the Internet. It's a virtual buyers market with consumers doing the research online prior to purchase, allowing them to decide what products they want, when they want them, and at what price.

The Third "P" of marketing is **Place** which involves the marketing channels that best reach your customer. However, on the Internet things work differently.

By its very nature the Internet becomes a direct marketing channel affording the consumer direct access to the manufacturer. By eliminating the middlemen (middle people?), manufacturers have opportunities to provide additional discounts to consumers.

A new and essential element of **Place** is the URL or website address your company uses. It's now an important distribution tool – it's the way consumers will routinely access your site.

Now you can use the Internet as a direct marketing/distribution channel in addition to your traditional channels. Consumers prefer to buy online because it's convenient, they can shop at their leisure, and they can research the best prices and deals.

With millions of websites online today, it's important for you to make consumers aware of you! This brings us to the Fourth "P", which is **Promotion**. Promoting a website will draw people there and so you can sell your products and services.

As in the case of traditional promotion, understanding your target audience(s) is critical. Targeted promotions on the Internet can provide global reach, relatively lower marketing costs, and improved awareness and visibility.

In order to launch an effective marketing campaign you need a well thought-out Internet marketing plan. Internet marketing can become all-encompassing without a strategy, and a budget is definitely needed for search engine marketing, branding and advertising online.

When you track your consumers' actions online, you are able to get immediate information regarding pages they've visited, time spent on each page and where they exited your site. This type of information has rocked the marketing world. Continually monitoring customer responses and movements allows you to make improvements resulting in a better return on investment and increased sales conversion rates. Unlike traditional advertising, online marketing is extremely trackable, and in real time.

The final and most crucial step involves integrating the branding of your Internet marketing with your conventional marketing. Internet marketing is not a replacement for traditional marketing – it's just one more tool in our toolkit.