

# **Drafting Futures**

Integrating Futures Thinking and Marketing Strategy

By Anna Claudia Ribeiro da Luz Colagrossi

Submitted to OCAD University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation

Toronto, Ontario, Canada,  
April 2017

© Anna Colagrossi; 2017

## COPYRIGHT NOTICE

This document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 2.5 Canada License.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/legalcode>

*You are free to:*

**Share** - copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

**Adapt** - remix, transform, and build upon the material

The license cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms

*Under the following conditions:*

**Attribution** - You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in a way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

**Non-Commercial** - You may not use the material for commercial purposes

**Share-Alike** - If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original

*With the understanding that:*

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.

No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use your material.

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I authorize OCAD University to lend the MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

I further authorize OCAD University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Anna Colagrossi

## Abstract

Given the rate of change inherent in the current business environment, it is imperative that businesses consider different futures when developing marketing strategies. This master's research paper asks, "What if the 4Ps Marketing Mix, a traditional marketing planning approach, was employed in conjunction with scenarios developed through the application of futures thinking?" This research looks into integrating futures thinking into a core marketing strategy approach. It explores this new combination and discusses some elements that marketers could consider when thinking about the future of their organizations, their clients, and communities.

## Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my primary advisor, Nabil Harfoush, for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. Your teachings will stay with me throughout the years.

Thank you to Suzanne Stein, who generously provided me with feedback and invaluable insights. You are an inspiration.

This research would not have been possible without the continuous support and encouragement received from my family, friends, and colleagues. I would like to especially recognize:

Carol, Ma, Mile, and Rapha: three continents, one support system.

Virginia and Manoel: I won the in-law lottery, and will never forget it.

My mother, Cristina, who gave me wings and unconditional love.

My sister, Cecilia, for being my hero and secret weapon. Nothing would be possible without you.

Finally, my husband, Rafael. Thank you for travelling 8,181 km with four heavy suitcases, two rescue cats, and one crazy dream. You are the best part of my life and *eu te amo, Peq.*

For my father, my guiding star.

## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
<i>Research Context</i>	1
Why Focus on Marketing?	2
<i>Background – The 4Ps Marketing Mix</i>	4
What are Futures Studies and Strategic Foresight?	6
Research Goal	7
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	8
Marketing	9
Four Ps	10
Exploring Futures Studies	13
Futures & Marketing	16
The Scenarios	19
Stalled Engines	19
Gini-In-A-Bottle	20
Nonstate World	21
Fusion	21
Chapter 3 – Methodology	22
Chapter 4 – Findings	32
<i>Alternative Scenario Activity</i>	32
Key insights from the Alternative Scenario activity	33
Guided Conversation	35
The importance of Futures Thinking:	35
Futures consideration	35
Time horizon	36
Frequency	36
Internal or External?	37
The ideal futures tool	38
Key insights for the guided conversations	39
A Framework for Future-Proof 4Ps	40
Chapter 5 – Conclusion	45
Limitations and Further Research	47
Next Steps	48

Bibliography	49
Appendix	52



## Table of Figures

Figure 1 - 4Ps description	5
Figure 2 - Marketing definitions based on the table in the article, "Marketing Mix," by Farzad Eavani and Kamran Nazari (2012)	10
Figure 3 - Criticism of the 4Ps model	12
Figure 4 - 4Ps for School X	23
Figure 5 - 4Ps framework for the Stalled Engines scenario	24
Figure 6 - 4Ps framework for Gini-In-A-Bottle scenario	25
Figure 7 - 4Ps framework for the Nonstate World scenario	26
Figure 8 - 4Ps framework for Fusion scenario	27
Figure 9 - Interviewees industry chart	29
Figure 10 - Interviewees organizations sizes	30
Figure 11 - Blank 4Ps framework	32
Figure 12 - Model prototype	41
Figure 13 - Framework considering different maturity levels	42
Figure 14 - Framework considering different maturity levels	44

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## *Research Context*

"In 1953, Neil Borden transformed the business world when he articulated the strategy of "Marketing Mix" in his AMA presidential address. Borden was just one of many AMA leaders who were not satisfied with existing best practices. These thought leaders sought answers for the future that would propel business growth and elevate the role of marketing."

American Marketing Association (AMA) Website

Is there such a thing as a future-proof marketing strategy? If so, why is it not being used by every company? With today's ever-shifting global economy, businesses must be agile enough to adapt to changing conditions in order to succeed. Indeed, an adaptive marketing strategy is a vital component of success. Nearly seventy years ago, American Marketing Association president Neil Borden introduced the 4Ps Marketing Mix model to meet the challenges faced by organizations at that time. A founding methodology of Marketing Strategy, the 4Ps demonstrate how decision makers can think of their strategy using four categories: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place. In 1964, Professor Edmund Jerome McCarthy refined Borden's ideas to create the concept of the 4Ps that is known today. To date, methodologies developed in the field of futures thinking have been largely absent from strategic marketing practices. This research paper addresses the possibility of employing the today's 4Ps method with methods of futures thinking to improve businesses' ability to strategize effectively for a changing world.

I have worked in marketing for the past decade, for such global brands as

Coca-Cola, Nestlé, and Google. As I moved from one brand to another, I realized that these seemingly unrelated marketing teams shared a common trait: they strove to foresee the future strategically, in order to stay ahead of changing conditions and the competition – yet, they often failed. While they employed a plethora of tools – ranging from CRM apps to real time analytics dashboards and share of mind trackers to marketing automation software – it seemed to me that that none of them helped the marketers integrate their knowledge with futures thinking.

My motivation for this research into existing and potential alignment between marketing and Futures Studies, is to strengthen marketing strategists' toolkits for agile and effective marketing in this rapidly changing, global business environment. By titling this research *Futures Draft* I hoped to demonstrate how one can think of different futures as a draft, a preliminary version that can be worked upon, modified, and studied. My intention is to show how professionals can have ownership of the future and think of strategies that may help their organizations moving forward.

This paper explores the following research question: **Can the combination of futures thinking with the 4Ps marketing mix create a new way for professionals to design more robust marketing strategies for their organizations?**

## Why Focus on Marketing?

The ways consumers buy products and services will always change. If we go back to the beginning of the 20th Century, one could order a hat or a prefabricated house from the Sears catalog (Cooke, & Friedman, 2001). Now, people follow

trendsetter's Instagram accounts and are able to buy an entire outfit without picking up a single sheet of paper. In order to survive, businesses need to keep up with change in their consumers' wants and needs. The marketing department is often thought of as the bridge between the consumer and the company (Rust, Moorman, Bhalla, 2010), so it appears to be a good place to increase organizational awareness. The continuous evolution of technology has increased the flexibility that both companies and consumers have (Kumar, & Whitney, 2007). It has affected the way people shop, communicate, consume entertainment and more, combined with new trends in consumer behaviour, like the rise of social media, crowdfunding, and ecological and social awareness, marketers must adapt to many changes to continue offering relevant products and services (Krashinsky, 2014). The relationships that marketers cultivate with consumers are vital to the sustainability of any business (Cook, 2012), so marketers have a vital role within organizations to help them adapt and thrive. Indeed, it could be argued that today's marketers face an advanced Darwinian challenge: except instead of survival depending on responsiveness to change, survival now depends on the ability to anticipate and adapt to this change before it even happens.

While it is impossible to change the past, the future offers a company opportunities to adapt. By focusing on potential possible futures, a marketing professional might get the valuable information that will better inform their organization's decisions when creating a strategy. "... *These thought leaders sought answers for the future ...*" (AMA website). I find it interesting that the marketing mix, designed by Neil Borden as a framework for finding just such future answers, does not incorporate any strategic foresight methodology. The interest from marketing practitioners to make better decisions regarding the future is not new. In the 70s and 80s, professional marketing

organizations began to pay more attention to futures thinking: In 1970, the AMA released a special issue of the Journal of Marketing focused on futures thinking. Years later, in 1987, the World Marketing Conference explored Futures Studies and how it could be beneficial in strategic planning.

## *Background – The 4Ps Marketing Mix*

“The Four Ps model of marketing is still king.”

Philip Kotler, Author, Marketing Professor and Consultant, 2013.

“We all know the 4 P’s of Marketing, which continue to play a significant role in driving corporate marketing and product management practices. As a brand marketer, you know that a marketing strategy lives and dies through how effectively your company navigates and harnesses the power of the 4 P’s.”

Colin Hare, Senior Vice President at 4i Consulting Group, 2016.

In this research, I explore the strategic marketing efforts within the venerable 4Ps, also known as the marketing mix, one of the most fundamental concepts of marketing (Waterschoot & Bulte, 1992). First articulated by Neil Borden in 1953, with the intent to provide answers for the future, ultimately benefiting organizations and consumers, the marketing mix approach relies on product, price, promotion, and place: the four Ps. The 4Ps has been the gold standard of marketing thought, taught for decades, and the object of ongoing discussion in academic publications and managerial practices. It was created to represent the four main, high-level categories that comprise the components of marketing strategy. Figure 1 explains in more detail each of the 4Ps.

Title	Description
<b>Product</b>	This P regards the product and/or service provided by the organization. The nature of this P is to offer a solution (product) that will meet customers' demands.
<b>Price</b>	This P relates to monetary value; it is the amount charged for said good or service.
<b>Promotion</b>	This P encapsulates all marketing communication strategies, including advertising efforts, sales promotions, special offers, and public relations.
<b>Place</b>	This final P presents the distribution strategy used to get the goods or services to the consumer.

*Figure 1 - 4Ps description*

The 4Ps approach was created in 1953, when physical products, physical distribution, and mass communication (TV, radio, and print) were dominant. Solutions mostly came in the form of manufactured things; there was no Uber, Netflix or Tinder. There certainly was no SpaceX. Today's digital revolution opens an array of possible new business, marketing and delivery models, and so, some marketers critique the 4Ps approach, and consider it outdated (Ciotti, 2016).

According to research conducted by Doren & Smith (1999), some businesses have difficulty questioning their assumptions, with the trouble embedded in how they project what the future might hold. To properly question their industry assumptions, organizations must look beyond their internal views about competencies and resource-based allocations. To generate a more accurate future topography, they must also account for how their consumers and the marketplace are changing, as well as how possible political, environmental and technological factors may influence their

business. This is where the marketing team can play a vital role in influencing the improvement of corporate strategy. I see much validity in applying the marketing mix approach to strategy development in this business environment, as long as it is honed by incorporating strategic foresight methods.

## What are Futures Studies and Strategic Foresight?

In the preface for the book, *Thinking about the Future* (ed. Andy Hines and Peter Bishop, 2006), Richard Slaughter writes:

Strategic foresight is the ability to create and sustain a variety of high quality forward views and to apply the emerging insights in organizationally useful ways; for example, to detect adverse conditions, guide policy, shape strategy; to explore new markets, products and services.

Futures studies offers professionals a way to look ahead, think about the challenges that could arise, and account for different reactions that the market could have (Schwartz, 1991). The future-looking tools developed within this field can strengthen strategic planning by capturing a range of possible futures and incorporating that range into planning. Futures tools are a great way to analyze the uncertainty that may impact an organization in the future, and help this organization deal with the uncertain environment that may arise (Gonzalez, 1992). In particular, the method called Scenario Planning is considered particularly effective in helping those engaged in futures studies to look ahead and plan accordingly to the different futures presented (Schwartz, 1991). Peter Schwartz defines scenario planning and scenarios in his book *The Art of the Long View*:

...A tool for ordering one's perceptions about alternative future environments in which one's decisions might be played out.

Alternatively: a set of organized ways for us to dream effectively about our own future. Concretely, they resemble a set of stories, either written out or often spoken. However, these stories are built around carefully constructed "plots" that make the significant elements of the world scene stand out boldly.

This research will use professionally developed scenarios to guide the interviews with the marketing professionals recruited to study this topic. As the excerpt above suggests, I hope that this research might be useful in nudging marketers to consider alternative future scenarios. By having the interviewees create new 4Ps strategies for their individual organizations for a set of future scenarios, I hope to prompt them to consider how their current strategies would fare and whether any elements of the marketing mix should be adapted in the hopes of creating a successful strategy.

## Research Goal

This study aims to strategically combine the 4Ps with foresight methods within futures studies, in an effort to boost marketers' success in developing future-facing strategies. Ultimately, I hope to answer the question: **How might the combination of futures thinking with the 4Ps marketing mix help create a new way for professionals to design better marketing strategies for their organizations?**

This paper is divided into the following sections.

**Chapter One: Introduction** - introduces the subject, the author's motivations, and the research question. It offers a brief history of the 4Ps, also known as the Marketing Mix, and explains the author's expectation that integrating Strategic Foresight into the planning process can strengthen strategic marketing for today's shifting business conditions.

**Chapter Two: Literature Analysis** - takes a closer look at definitions of marketing, the 4Ps, and the criticism around it, and provides more information about Futures Studies. Also, it details the scenarios selected for the interview with marketing professionals.

**Chapter Three: Methodology** - describes the methods used for this research.



**Chapter Four: Findings** - notes what was learned from the interviews. It presents the different findings that emerged from analyzing the interview data.

**Chapter Five: Conclusion** - summarizes the findings of the research project, points out the research's limitations, and offers further research potential.

My hope in applying the lessons of this research goes beyond expanding my own understanding of the topic. I also hope to create a tool for marketers to use as stepping-stone toward greater willingness and confidence in applying Futures Studies to their strategic planning. I believe that the more marketers incorporate strategic foresight methods in their planning, the greater their companies' chances are for being agile and adaptive to shifting conditions, since said companies will be propelled by employees who will be constantly questioning their assumptions, discussing novel ideas, and creating hypothetical contingency plans. In effect, the tool proposed in this paper will bring upon a single, crucial change in the company's culture: where today most employers expect their employees to know about the company's past - its early days and history leading up to the present – now these employers will expect their employees to also continuously engage in anticipating the future. Ultimately, this will lead to value creation: they will be offering more robust products and services on the marketplace, which will be more desirable to their customer.

"Television won't be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."

Darryl Zanuck, executive at 20th Century Fox, 1946

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter will examine published works on both marketing and futures studies. This literature review and analysis has two foci: the process of developing marketing strategies, with a primary focus on the 4Ps/marketing mix approach; and futures studies methodologies, in particular those that might integrate well with marketing strategy development. I also sought, in the futures studies literature, scenarios that might work well as part of my research method, in particular during the expert interviews.

## Marketing

Philip Kotler and Ryan Turner defined marketing in *Marketing Management*, as "*a social and managerial process that involves individuals and groups obtaining what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging products of value with other*" (1996). The definition presented is very broad; I believe that it was written to be applicable to different business models. That being said, Kotler and Turner write about needs and wants and the creation and exchange of value and this concept is of the utmost importance because a consumer's needs and wants aren't static; they can change due to internal and external factors, and naturally marketers must pay attention to these changes.

Figure 2 offers additional definitions of what marketing is. It is based on the article "Marketing Mix" by Farzad Eavani and Kamran Nazari (2012).

Scholar	Year	Definitions of Marketing
Chysnral	1992	Finding a suitable position in the market.
Mercer	1996	Understanding what people want, seeking a market and supply and provision of goods and services to meet the consumer's needs and goals.
Cohen	1998	The range of activities that includes the buying and selling of goods, as well as transport and storage thereof.
Baker	1998	A series of activities called the flow of commercial goods and services from producer to final consumer.
Goharian	1990	It is the structure and demand for products and services that is estimated to predict the spread.
Ranjbariyan	1993	The aim is to satisfy human needs, and to define the process of how, considering the market. Also, it represents the buyer and seller in a shared marketplace.
Hosseini	1991	A set of human and economic activities conducted in order to satisfy the needs and demands of the people through the exchange process.

Figure 2 - Marketing definitions based on the table in the article, "Marketing Mix," by Farzad Eavani and Kamran Nazari (2012)

Some of the definitions selected are in accordance with what Kotler and Turner propose: they write of understanding the consumer's needs and wants, the delivery of a product or services, and the value creation. They also include notions of achieving a good market position, the concept of a marketplace, and of transportation and storage.

## Four Ps

"Can anyone name a marketing textbook that doesn't have the 4Ps as the basic framework?"

Don Schultz, PhD, Professor Emeritus at Northwestern University, 2001

As the quote above suggests, the 4Ps – product, price, promotion, and place – marketing mix has been considered a gold standard of strategic marketing planning, has been taught for decades, and remains the object of discussion both in academic publications and managerial practices. Here in Toronto, it is taught by top MBA programs like Rotman’s and Schulich’s. The concept began to coalesce in 1953, when then American Marketing Association President Neil Borden identified twelve marketing elements, such as product planning, branding, pricing, distribution channels, and advertising, that should be managed properly in order for businesses to thrive (Borden, 1959). In 1964, Jerome McCarthy synthesized Borden’s elements into four categories, creating the 4P framework we now know (Dominici, 2009). Marketing professionals and academics received the framework extremely well, and it soon became an indispensable element of marketing strategy management and theory (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995). Many consider the approach to be a tried-and-true formula for creating an effective marketing plan. An interesting exercise to demonstrate the concept’s widespread acceptance is to do an online search for any known company name followed by “4Ps”, for example, typing “Disney 4Ps” into a search engine. Over 100 thousand will come up in English alone, with more pages to be found in Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

The 4Ps model has received its share of criticism. Kotler (1984) points out that the schema does not take into account external factors that may be uncontrollable from within the organization; Kotler proposed that two additional Ps be added: political power and public opinion formation. A decade later, Doyle (1994) points out that the approach does not take in consideration the interaction between consumer and staff. He argues that it would be necessary to include a Services and Staff perspective into

the existing mix. Bennett (1997) explores how the model focuses too much on internal components and the lack of attention in the model to the customer, and proposes a model for use with the 4Ps that focuses on customer disposition; the five Vs standing for Value, Variety, Viability, Volume and Virtue. Schultz (2001) agrees that traditional 4Ps model only focuses on what the marketer can control. He posits that since the market today is customer oriented, a new marketing mix should focus on this conceptual triad: Customer, Marketer, and Employee. This new approach would focus on the customers' needs and wants, what the marketer has defined to be the characteristics of the product and service, and on the employee, who Schultz considers is often overlooked by traditional marketing methods, and who works to produce the product/service and often interacts with the customer.

<b>Scholar</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Criticism</b>
Kotler	1984	Lack of consideration for external factors that are beyond the control of the organization.
Doyle	1994	Because of its age, the model does not take into consideration the unique characteristics of service marketing: staff and services.
Bennett	1997	Lacks focus on the perspective of the customer; a current model would need to introduce the idea of buyer disposition.
Schultz	2001	The model is outdated, since it only focuses on what the marketer can control. A new model would consider the customers and the employees, with special emphasis on the sales team.

*Figure 3 - Criticism of the 4Ps model*

Despite ongoing criticism of the 4Ps model, it continues to be used in the field and taught in academia. That professionals and academics continue to criticize the 4Ps in journals and other publications after nearly 70 years, demonstrates just how profoundly the marketing sector has embraced the model since inception. When

interviewed in 2013 by Neelima Mahajan about the future of marketing, Philip Kotler said: "*The Four Ps model of marketing is still king.*"

Marketing dictates how an organization presents its products or services to the public, so leveraging insights into the future while planning a marketing strategy is vitally important. Strategic foresight techniques might help marketers envision what their consumers will want and need ahead.

## Exploring Futures Studies

Humankind has always tried to predict the future. Throughout history, humanity has tried tapping into the divine or nature in order to know: What is next? This search, be it by reading tea leaves or interpreting dreams, is derived from innate human curiosity (Schultz, 2015) and survival instinct (Bell, 1997).

Starting in the twentieth century, primarily since World War II, some researchers began to call themselves *futurists*, and began developing methods, both quantitative and qualitative, for the purpose of attempting a rational way to anticipate the future (Son, 2015). Futures studies, as the name suggests, is the academic field dedicated to studying the future. It is important to note that it has no prognostic intent; rather, its goal is to extrapolate a range of possible futures (Arkenberg, 2013). While Futures Studies has been applied by academia and by governmental agencies seeking better defense and planning strategies (Bacon, 2012), the first notable civil application was done by Shell in 1966 (Jefferson, 2012). The company experimented with scenario planning and, due to this practice, Shell had a better performance than other oil companies during the Oil Shock of 1973 (Wilkinson, & Kupers, 2013).

In *Foundations of Futures Studies* (1997), Professor Wendell Bell writes that the main purpose of Futures Studies is "*to discover or invent, examine and evaluate, and propose possible probable and preferable futures.*" Bell then breaks down this main purpose into nine categories: 1. the study of possible futures; 2. the study of probable futures; 3. the study of images of the future; 4. the research of knowledge foundations; 5. the study of ethical foundations; 6. past interpretation and present orientation; 7. integrating knowledge and values; 8. increasing democratic participation in future design; and 9. advocating a favorable image of the future.

According to Bell, his nine categories incorporated H.D. Lasswell's (1967) five objectives of Futures Studies: 1. The clarification of goals and values; 2. The description of trends; 3. The examination of conditions; 4. The projection of possible and probable futures if current policies are continued; and 5. The invention, evaluation, and selection of policy alternatives (in order to achieve a preferred goal). Lasswell's five purposes appear to be intentionally ordered: it is necessary to first determine your goal in order to know what trends must be followed. The previous step is also important for examining the conditions that will be considered in the future planning. The fourth step, the projection of possible and probable futures, is needed to complete the fifth: the design of evaluation metrics and policies in order to achieve this preferred future.

But why should organizations take time to study the future? By looking to the future, and by understanding what might lie ahead, one can make better decisions and prepare for change. Good futures thinking can reduce the risk of an organization being blindsided by a future event (Hines & Bishop, 2006). It can help organizations think beyond the now, and serve as the basis for creating products and services that will

match the different wants and needs of the future (Duin, 2016). Organizations can become more future resilient and better prepared.

Scenarios development, including its planning and analysis, is a branch of Futures Studies (Moen & Jonsson, 2009); scenarios can be both a method and an outcome of other strategic foresight methods. As a method, scenario planning is a tool for anticipating alternative futures, by stimulating the evaluation of current contexts and the impact of futures events, ultimately facilitating the strategic decision making process (Hervé, 2011). As a result, scenarios are a way to summarize the results of the futures research that was developed and to arrange the different factors so they illuminate the decision making process (Schwartz, 1991). They can be the outcome of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Bell, 1996). These scenarios will tell a story of the possible outcomes and give details of what may happen. In his book *Foresight in Organizations* (2016), Patrick van der Duin writes about the different categories of scenarios. Scenarios can be divided into three types: (1) external scenarios, (2) internal strategic scenarios, and (3) system scenarios. The first kind focus on the factors that the organization cannot influence. They might describe the world or environment in which said organization is situated, but the organization itself is not part of the scenario presented. The second, internal strategic scenarios, show the possible consequences of strategic decision made by organizations, demonstrating how these decisions affect future development. The third kind, systems scenarios, are a combination of external and internal strategic scenarios. (Duin, 2016). The division proposed by Duin about the types of scenarios touches one key point: influence. It is hard to imagine an organization that operates as a silo, not only can external factors influence an organization, but an organization also has the ability to influence its



environment. The systems scenario approach, the combination of both external and internal strategic scenarios, seems to be a more realistic way to approach scenarios. However, for the purpose of exercising futures thought, I believe that initially dividing between internal and external may help the organizations run through the process.

## Futures & Marketing

Finding literature that combined marketing and Futures Studies proved to be a challenge. One article I was able to locate depicts how Doris C. Van Doren and Darlene Brannigan Smith (1999) explored how to integrate scenario planning with marketing strategy in an MBA program. They pointed out that combining both fields, Marketing and Futures Studies, helps marketing managers (1) identify value drivers to assess future marketing environments, (2) properly define a scope, and (3) determine competitive positioning.

Andrew Curry, Gill Ringland and Laurie Young (2006) explored how to incorporate scenarios into marketing strategy. They make the case that long-term futures thinking in marketing is not beneficial to marketing teams, because what they require is "*near-term future and current trends*" in order to properly create marketing plans. Bacon (2012) suggests that short-term futures are usually more accurate than long-term futures, because the trends that will affect the former are already in place. An alternative view, Michman (1984) proposes that the time horizon that organizations should consider should vary according to the organization's business model and "*...the rate at which the environment of the firm changes.*" Michman suggests that organizations should think about their product lifecycle, their suppliers, and their

customer profile when deciding what time horizon to consider in futures research.

Andrew Curry, Gill Ringland and Laurie Young (2006) also explore how scenarios can be used with well-known marketing tools, such as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). They cite the benefits of combining tools to gain a broader perspective and provide a framework for discussions and testing assumptions. The paper urges marketers to use scenarios to gain insights and to be positioned to anticipate what the market might want and adapt faster than the competition.

In 1990, the American Marketing Association (AMA) produced a study on the future of marketing. This report was later transformed into a book: *Marketing 2000 and Beyond*. It explores the benefits of incorporating futures thinking, or what the publication titles “Forward Thinking,” with marketing strategy. The book included interviews with marketing practitioners, futurists, and marketing academicians in search for insights, best practices and opinions. The book lists the main benefits of including “forward thinking” as:

- Ability to obtain valuable insights about new and profitable market segments.
- Identification of possible shifts of target market.
- New ideas about products and services and how they should be marketed and positioned.
- Distribution channels insights.
- Inputs on potential new market campaigns and other communication programs.
- More sophisticated understanding of competition.
- Improved understanding of supplier.

These benefits all have the same idea: by knowing what may lay ahead, organizations can be better prepared. The authors state that "*executives cannot overestimate the*

*importance of preparing for the future.*" The book concludes by stating that futures thinking will have a prominent role, both on marketing strategy and market research. *"Futures thinking will become a normal consideration – a basic input – a regular building block for the most critical marketing management activities of tomorrow."*

Both book and research were concluded over 27 years ago, and while the futures thinking has risen in popularity, many marketing departments still do not seek to employ its techniques in their planning. The reason for this may be lack of knowledge about Futures, as different organizations have different levels of maturity regarding futures thinking. Terry Grim (2009) proposed a Foresight Maturity Model (FMM). It is a framework that provides organizations with a numerical assessment of their current futures practices and uses the six disciplines proposed on the book, *Thinking about the Future*, edited by Andy Hines and Peter Bishop. The disciplines are acting, framing, scanning, forecasting, visioning, and planning. The FMM classifies organizations according to these disciplines, but renamed the discipline of 'acting' to 'leadership' on the model. To assess their foresight maturity, an organization looking to use the proposed framework doesn't necessarily need to use Terry Grim's model, but it will need to find a way to properly assess their current maturity. Medina Abdelkader (2016) applied and expanded version of Grim's FMM and concluded that an organization that has high maturity towards futures thinking is made up of empowered employees who consider the long term on three levels: personal, organizational, and societal. Abdelkader's research shows the importance of having organizations that are well prepared to deal with the future.

Chapter 3: Methodology will include the following professionally-developed scenarios chosen for use in this research project: Stalled Engines, Gini-in-a-Bottle, Nonstate World, and Fusion.

# The Scenarios

For over twenty years, The United States National Intelligence Council has produced an annual report that contains possible futures. This report is considered by some to be the best long-range, geopolitical-forecast analysis conducted by the United States government (Barnett, 2012). These scenarios were developed at the beginning of former President Obama's second administration. They consider four possible worlds in the year 2030. According to Duin's (2016) classification they are external scenarios.

Below is a brief description adapted from the report for each scenario. It is important to note that the scenarios descriptions of the report leave much room for interpretation; some imagination by the reader is needed to fill in gaps. Despite its issues, the report provides over 160 pages of useful analysis. Also, it has a wide breadth, and I found that useful, since I interviewed different marketing professionals that work in diverse fields. The complete report can be found here: <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/global-trends-2030> . For this research, I selected these scenarios for two main reasons: the credibility of The United States National Intelligence Council; and because the scenarios were, as I mentioned before, developed with a wide scope. Since I planned on later interviewing marketing experts of different fields, I imagined the wide scope would be useful.

## Stalled Engines

The report considers this the most plausible worst-case scenario: What happens in this scenario is that the United States and Europe are no longer capable of or interested in sustained global leadership. The United States and Europe

see that there is political damage, when they engage in a major conflict, so they turn inward. This means that the risk of conflict between different nations increases and, like the title suggests, globalization is stalled. The rise of corruption, social issues, and a weakened financial system cause decreasing growth rates in developing nations. The global governance system is unable to cope with a widespread pandemic: wealthy countries wall themselves off from poorer countries around the globe. This disrupts international travel and trade. Globalization is stalled. In this scenario, all countries do, according to the report, relatively poorly.

## Gini-In-A-Bottle

According to the report, this scenario represents a world of extremes:

This scenario is named after the Gini coefficient that measures statistical dispersion, and is usually applied to measure inequality. The name is appropriate, because in this scenario inequalities are manifested within countries and between rich and poor countries. The scenario can be defined by two self-reinforcing cycles: a positive one that leads to greater prosperity, and a negative one, that leads to economical downfall. An example would include the scenario in which the United States gains energy independence. On one hand, locally, the USA would thrive. On the other hand, countries that rely on oil production and did not diversify their energy sources would struggle once oil prices went down, leading to poverty and instability, as well as an increase in political and social tensions. This causes digital crime to rise, which in turn causes users to increasingly mistrust the online environment. Economic growth, though, does continue at a moderate pace. This scenario's disruptions are less severe than Stalled Engines.

## Nonstate World

According to the report, this scenario is the second best:

In this scenario, nonstate agencies predominate. The rise of technology causes the greater empowerment of individuals and organizations. Empowered, these nonstate actors (individuals and organizations) take the lead in dealing with the world's major challenges. Some global problems are solved due to the cooperation that exists across state and nonstate lines. There is also imbalance in this scenario: countries that are ruled by authoritarian regimes have a difficult time operating in this scenario, while smaller, more nimble countries flourish. This is a hyper-globalized world, where being fast and efficient counts more than having a traditional position. Security becomes a concern in this scenario. Criminal actors gain access to possibly lethal technology. This world, though, still fares better than the one in the Gini-In-A-Bottle scenario, because of presence of an overall sense of greater cooperation.

## Fusion

This is the report's most plausible best-case scenario:

The spreading conflict in South Asia causes the USA, China and Europe to cooperate and intervene to solve the conflict. Washington and Beijing then find further opportunities for collaboration, which results in worldwide cooperation regarding other global challenges. Economically speaking, emerging economies have a faster growth rate than advanced economies, but advanced economies also grow, albeit slower. Immigration is on the rise, as mobility between borders increases. The American dream is back. Global cooperation boosts technological innovation, which helps the world stay ahead of rising resource constraints resulting from the rise in

prosperity.

The four scenarios created by the he United States National Intelligence Council depict what the world could look like in the year 2030. The conclusion of the report states: "*We have sought here to delineate four archetypal futures that represent distinct pathways for future developments out to 2030. In reality, the future probably will consist of elements from all the alternative worlds.*"

"Remote shopping, while entirely feasible, will flop."  
Time Magazine, 1966.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

On completing the literature review, my next step was to design the research so that it might answer my question: "What if the 4Ps Marketing Mix, a traditional marketing planning approach, was employed in conjunction with scenarios developed through the application of futures thinking?" I needed to test the design I had in mind – using these scenarios in interviews – before deploying it more broadly. First, I created a 4Ps model for a continuing education institution that I had worked for, that will be called **School X**, as shown in the Figure 4. **School X** is a division of a leading university, it focuses on professional continuing education, offering courses and certificate programs.

<p><b>Product</b></p> <p>Mostly in-person courses focused on Business, Technology, Arts and Languages.</p> <p>Specific department focused on teaching English and French.</p>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <p>Mostly print and out-of-home ads (Subway posters, newspaper ads) in Toronto.</p> <p>Social Media &amp; limited digital advertising</p>
<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Premium price. Higher than competition.</p>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Classrooms in downtown Toronto</p> <p>Very limited online access (exams have to be conducted in-person)</p>

Figure 4 - 4Ps for School X

Figure 4 shows the current 4Ps for a continuing education learning institution. For Product, the institution offers mostly in-person classes focused on business, technology, arts, and different languages. For Promotion, there are mostly out-of-home ads, like subway posters and billboards on busy intersections, and paid advertising in newspapers and magazines. The promotion efforts are also made present in social media and a very small portion of the budget is dedicated to digital ads: SEM (search engine marketing) and display ads (paid banners in third-party websites). For Price, the tuition currently charged for the courses is the highest amongst the competition. There are no discounts or payment plans available. For Place, the courses are currently offered in downtown Toronto. There is a very limited selection of courses provided online, and the examination for said courses still need to be taken in person.



Then I proceeded to study the scenarios created by the National Intelligence Council in 2013 depicting four possible global futures for the year 2030. The scenarios are titled *Stalled Engines*, *Gini-In-A-Bottle*, *Nonstate World*, and *Fusion*. I began testing the learning institution's 4Ps framework against each of the four scenarios to determine if the 4Ps strategy would need to be modified in order for School X to thrive in each of the scenarios. Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 show the adapted 4Ps framework for each of the scenarios.

## Stalled Engines

<p><b>Product</b></p> <p>Less focus on language courses to help travelers, more on experiencing culture remotely, since you can't be there. Updated courses focused on new economic needs.</p>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <p>Mexico could be a new place to target, since travel will be restricted within North America.</p>
<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Offer discount to attract internal consumer.</p> <p>Accept payment options available in Mexico.</p>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Offer courses with partner learning institutions in Mexico.</p>

Figure 5 - 4Ps framework for the *Stalled Engines* scenario

Figure 5 depicts a possible 4Ps approach to the *Stalled Engines* scenario. Since travel in that scenario will be restricted, the language courses that are currently available

could be redesigned and promoted as a way to experience the culture without being there. The business courses would also need to be updated to reflect the new economic reality. Mexico can be an important ally in this scenario, not only can the institution partner with Mexican institutions to offer classes in different Mexican cities, but since travel will probably be restricted within North America, School X could expand their advertising to Mexico as well. Since the influx of international students will be affected by the travel restriction, the institution could offer discounts to capture the domestic market.

Next is the framework for the *Gini-in-a-Bottle* scenario in figure 6:

## Gini-In-A-Bottle

<p><b>Product</b></p> <p>Update all technology courses. Focus on cybersecurity.</p>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <p>Cut online advertisements, focus on newspaper.</p>
<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Reduce price to get consumers, who aren't able to get into higher education due to governmental budget cuts.</p>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Since online won't be possible, partner with the TDSB and have more learning centers at night.</p>

Figure 6 - 4Ps framework for *Gini-In-A-Bottle* scenario

In the *Gini-in-a-Bottle* scenario all technology courses would have to be updated,

because of the new threats. New courses could also focus on cybersecurity to meet the increasing demand. Since the internet won't be considered safe, School X should cease to invest in digital advertising. The price point could also be revisited: because of possible governmental funding cuts, many consumers would lose their ability to pursue higher education and might be persuaded to get a continuing education diploma instead. Since online courses won't be possible, School X could possibly partner with the Toronto District School Board to use their classrooms after hours and reach consumers that couldn't go to downtown Toronto.

The next scenario analysed is the *Nonstate World*:

## Nonstate World

<p><b>Product</b></p> <p>Knowledge sharing is key. Integrate student knowledge with course offering.</p>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <p>Explore sponsorship with famous brands, i.e. Tesla Innovation Course, Google Big Data course.</p>
<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Offer options to crowdfund courses and guarantee special prices to early adopters.</p>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Online will be key. No geographical boundaries.</p>

Figure 7 - 4Ps framework for the *Nonstate World* scenario

In the *Nonstate World* scenario, the current business model could become outdated: School X could possibly integrate both students' and instructors' knowledge when

creating teaching material. Also, the way the courses are promoted could be revisited. School X could partner with well-respected brands and offer exclusive content while harnessing the power of these brands to refresh the School's image. The pricing strategy would also need to be updated; School X could find new ways to finance the courses, possibly through crowdfunding. As for Place, the institution would have to invest in online teaching.

The final scenario is *Fusion*:

## Fusion

<p><b>Product</b></p> <p>Shorter courses to make them more dynamic.</p> <p>Consider having classes with translators, to aid ESL learners.</p>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <p>Partner with newcomer centers to spread the word among immigrants.</p> <p>Associate brand image with tradition; the real Canadian learning institution</p>
<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Continue with price for Canadian learners but consider charging international learners a premium in exchange for diploma validation and other services.</p>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Continue to offer courses both online and in person, but open branches in provinces that have easier immigration policies.</p>

Figure 8 - 4Ps framework for Fusion scenario

In this scenario, the Product strategy would have to be updated to match new consumers' needs. Also, because immigration will probably be on the rise, School X

could study the possibility of offering translators to help consumers whose English is a second language. On Promotion, the institution could partner with newcomer centers to help publicize with newcomers. For Price, they could continue to charge Canadian learners the same, but charge international learners more and include extra benefits, like international diploma validation and English tutoring. Finally, for Place, the learning institution could continue to offer both online and in-person courses but could also study creating new branches in provinces that have more flexible immigration policies.

This trial run, applying insights from the four scenarios to School X's 4Ps and seeing that changes should be made accordingly, validated my research approach, and enabled me to move forward with the project: interviewing marketing professionals, regarding the scenarios. Before I could recruit participants, I applied for approval of OCAD University Research Ethics Board (REB). According to the REB website, all OCAD U student research that involves living human participants (in my case, the marketing professionals) needs to be reviewed and approved by the board. The process was simple, since the nature of research focuses mainly on organizational practices, this is outlined by the Interview Guide included in the appendix of this research. Since organizational strategy is a sensitive topic, it is important to point out that the 4Ps frameworks created by the marketing professionals are not being shared on this research. This is a decision that came after I encountered some resistance in recruiting participants that were willing to share their possible marketing strategies.

The ten experienced professionals who participated are currently living in the Greater Toronto Area. Each has two or more years working in the field of marketing, and is

either self-employed or employed by a private organization. Five of the ten participants were themselves students or graduates of OCAD University's Strategic Foresight and Innovation program, which both skewed the cross-section of participants and produced many insights based on deep understanding of Futures Studies. The ten professionals fit evenly into two categories: those who work for marketing teams in organizations that had their core business in areas like finance, real estate, and tech; and those who work for organizations that have marketing as their central business, such as advertising agencies, marketing communications consultancy, and marketing research. Figure 9 shows the different industries and Figure 10 shows the different organization sizes.

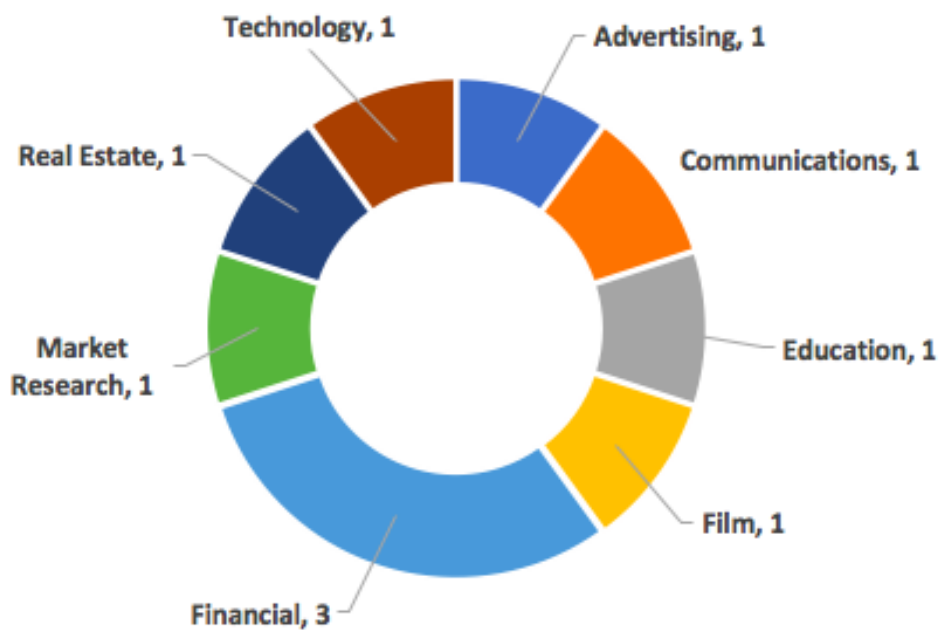


Figure 9 - Interviewees industry chart



Figure 10 - Interviewees organizations sizes

The ten interviews were conducted in February and March, 2017.

Each interview was designed to last approximately one hour and was divided into two stages. During the first 30 minutes, I guided the expert through an introductory activity: they were first asked to articulate the current 4Ps of their organization. Then, I shared two of the scenarios with the interviewee, in each case asking if and how their organization's 4Ps would need to change in order to be competitive. The choice to present only two of the four scenarios in each interview was made due to time constraints. For the first scenario, each expert was given either the *Stalled Engines* or the *Gini-in-a-Bottle* scenarios. The second scenario was either the *Nonstate World* or the *Fusion*. Each scenario was used five times, ensuring that the division was equal.

The last 30 minutes of the interview consisted of a guided conversation, wherein I asked pre-developed questions related to marketing strategy and foresight. From the interviews, I wanted to either confirm or reject my hypothesis that the 4Ps framework

of the interviewed organization would change when faced with the futures scenarios.

In the final stage of this research, I synthesized key understandings from the literature review and the interviews. I embarked on a sense-making journey, manipulating the notes and transcripts from the interviews to group the information in ways that would create insights into how marketers might relate to a Futures Studies tool.

In summary, the research process for this MRP can be divided into the following phases:

1. Literature review: I read several pieces of literature about marketing strategy and Futures Studies. They helped this research by providing greater clarity about both topics.
2. Analysis of learning from literature: I identified an activity type that combined futures thinking with the 4Ps marketing mix to use for my research.
3. Prototype: I prototyped the approach myself, applying the scenarios to a company of which I had first-hand knowledge.
4. Research with marketers: I applied the proposed activity combining futures thinking with the 4Ps marketing mix in interviews with ten different marketing professionals.
5. Analysis of interviews: I analyzed the different reactions that the marketers had in responding to the scenarios as well as my notes on the in-depth conversations I had with each participant after the activity.



# Chapter 4 – Findings

In this chapter, I share my findings from the ten interviews. The findings appear in two sections that match the division of activity of the expert interviews. The first section delves into the alternative scenario activity that was conducted at the beginning of each interview. The second section presents what I learned from the guided conversations with each expert participant, after the scenario activity ended.

## *Alternative Scenario Activity*

At the start of each interview, I asked the expert participant to write down their organization's current marketing mix in a blank framework, as shown by the figure 11.

Product	Price
Promotion	Place

*Figure 11 - Blank 4Ps framework*

I then presented the expert with one of four scenarios for the year 2030 and asked them to reflect on whether and how each of the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and

Promotion) should be altered in order for the organization to thrive in this alternative future scenario. I repeated the process with a second scenario for the same year. With only one exception, all the participants claimed that they would change at least three of their Ps in order for their organizations to thrive in the future.

I expected some degree of credibility concern regarding the scenarios, that the interviewees would outright reject elements of the alternative future presented, and that this resistance would become an obstacle to facilitating the exercise. To my surprise, all the interviewees willingly worked with the scenarios as presented; they jumped in quickly and with a problem-solving mindset, wanting to make sure their organizations would take the best advantage of each scenarios' conditions. While this accepting disposition might not be universal in a larger sampling of participants, it is important to note that it did exist within this sample. This might have been because all participants were aware when they agreed to participate that this was futures thinking research. Possibly, too, the marketers' mindset might be predisposed to contemplate different futures. Further study with more participants under slightly differing circumstances would need to be done to point to a cause for this phenomenon.

## Key insights from the Alternative Scenario activity

The main findings for this first part were:

- Most marketers would change the strategic implications of their 4Ps when given a new scenario. Besides one of the experts, whose 4Ps didn't change in both scenarios (*Stalled Engines & Fusion*) that were presented, the only two

cases of elements that didn't change were within the *Fusion* scenario: one of the interviewees said that their current Price strategy would stay the same, and the other interviewee explained that their current Promotion strategy would not be altered.

- Once they received the second scenario, most of the participants were already jumping ahead, thinking of combined strategies that would work in *both* scenarios. I concluded that it might be a professional proclivity for marketers to think of solutions they could apply today that could also future-proof their organization through differing future scenarios.
- The interviewees did not question the credibility or plausibility of the scenarios. When asked why not, their responses included the idea that their acceptance was based on the fact that the scenarios presented were created by a well-respected institution, and that they were the product of thorough analysis. When dealing with scenarios, it might be important to make sure they are professionally developed by accredited institutions, since the credibility of the institution seems to influence acceptance by the participants.

The Alternative Scenario activity was performed during the first half of each marketer interview. I consider the activity a success because it demonstrated how well the sample adapted their 4Ps approach to each new scenario and provided this research additional insights. Regarding the degree of change amongst the Ps, most marketers spent more time discussing the Product aspect than the rest of the Ps. Also, the marketers tried to create broad strategies that would work in both scenarios and that the marketers had an easy time suspending disbelief and accepting the scenarios as an impending reality.

## Guided Conversation

After completing the introductory activity, I conducted a guided conversation with each marketing professional. During these conversations, the expert participants shared their views and opinions, ranging from the marketing mix to their organization's current "future comfort level."

## The importance of Futures Thinking:

The majority of marketers interviewed commented on their fear of obsolescence: they talked about how the market can change and how corporations can cease to exist. The experts talked about how technology can cause disruption, mentioning companies like Kodak, Nokia, and Blockbuster, as well as shifts in consumer behaviour. They noted that the way consumers choose one brand over another might change: Will they become more price sensitive? More social-responsibility sensitive? One of the interviewees commented, *"What do you do if you work in milk, and wake up one day, and everyone is talking about how bad milk is for your health?"* The interviewees mostly did not discuss the future from an opportunities perspective, focusing more on the risks and threats that the future might hold.

## Futures consideration

This fear of obsolescence prompted questions about their current organizations' level of openness to thinking about the future. Some of those interviewed commented on how they felt they were more concerned about possible futures than others in their

organization. Some commented on how no one in their organizations think about what could happen, except in terms of sales increasing or decreasing due to financial projections. Here I noticed a common trait among the experts: most interviewees commented on how they are usually so busy with their daily projects that they and the rest of their colleagues do not have time to stop and reflect on the different changes in the market. As one expert said, "*You only care about the future when things start to go wrong, and by then it's almost always too late.*"

## Time horizon

The time horizon considered when analyzing the future was something that separated the experts: about half would rather work with what some termed a closer future, a 3-5-year timeframe, while others preferred the longer view, 10-20 years into the future. When asked if both timeframes were important, all the experts answered in the affirmative, though some said that it is hard to act on a future that is too far away. "*The world works on a short-term basis,*" one participant responded. I believe that while it might seem harder to act immediately on a distant future, it is interesting to think way ahead because it allows the organization time to setup ideas that may come into action on the distant future. Also, the organization might generate better insights on the future and have action plans in place, which will ultimately cut down time on the preparation phase, and make the organization act faster when needed.

## Frequency

How often should marketing experts think about the future? There were two main groups of responses: when developing/reviewing a product, and during scheduled

“futures reviews.” While some interviewees replied that it should be both, the majority answered that that it would be best when developing/reviewing a product or service:

**When Developing/Reviewing a Product/Service:** Some stated that it is better to think of the future when a product or service is being developed and when it is being reviewed. For example, during yearly business plan creations, a portion of the plan should focus on the futures for their market.

**Scheduled:** This group expressed that it would be better to analyze possible futures according to a predefined schedule. The answers in this category varied from once a week to once every quarter. This option differs from the former because it would not be contingent to a project or event. Rather, it would be scheduled independently of whatever else is happening within the organization. *"Imagine how great it would be if the team got together for a Future Friday? A day where all everyone did was discuss the future and analyze scenarios and reports,"* said one interviewee. When asked to explain what was meant by “Future Friday,” the interviewee said that it would be great to have a day dedicated to think of long-term futures. If an organization doesn't have experience with incorporating futures thinking in their planning, this may mean that they will probably deal with a short time horizon, because it is more manageable. This made me wonder if it might be useful to have different ways to deal with futures that are closer and futures that are more distant.

## Internal Team or External Partners?

When it comes to adopting futures-thinking strategy in a company, should the reports and scenarios be curated/produced by an internal team or should this be outsourced to

external consultants? Or maybe both? Many professionals interviewed had difficulty answering this question. Some arguments for sticking with an internal team included confidentiality, knowledge of organization, and power to influence the organization throughout the year. Arguments for hiring an external team were: a fresh perspective coming, better access to tools and reports, and cost efficiency. It was unsurprising to me that the interviewees who worked in organizations providing marketing solutions to third-party organizations all answered that an external organization should be hired or that a combination of both external and internal teams should be used.

## The ideal futures tool

When the end of the interviews was approaching, I asked the interviewees to imagine, based on their knowledge, what an ideal Futures Studies tool would be. The comments ranged from having very specific industry reports on trends to global scenarios. It was also pointed out by some that even with the best tools to explore the future, it is necessary to have the organization on board. The professionals brought up the importance of having total organizational buy-in to properly analyze possible futures. *"It is not enough to have the marketing department worried about the future; the whole organization needs to be involved,"* one of the interviewees said. However, when asked if this buy-in should begin with the marketing department, there was a difference in opinions: three interviewees, all part of the SFI program, believed that the pursuit of organization Futures Studies should in fact start with the marketing team; the remaining seven felt that this interest should begin with leadership. Since the interviewees that felt that it should begin within the marketing team had all been part of the SFI program, this could be a possible indicator that their 'futures maturity' is greater than the rest of their organizations. One could imagine that because of their

maturity and the fact that they were all marketing professionals, they felt that it should start within the marketing department.

One of the interviewees commented that combining the 4Ps with futures thinking was a great way to proselytize their organization into considering a "foresight-infused market strategy."

While the second part of the interviews did not focus as much on the 4Ps framework, it provided valuable insights about practical considerations that organizations may have when adopting future-forward strategies.

## Key insights for the guided conversations

The main findings from the guided conversations were:

- Futures thinking should not be confined to the marketing department; all organizational departments and hierarchical levels should take the time to think about how different futures may impact the organization.
- While there does not seem to be a consensus regarding an ideal time horizon for futures thinking in marketing, it appears that there are two preferred horizons sets: 3-5 years and 10-20 years in the future.
- Overall, it seems that it might be easier to analyze short-term horizons within the marketing team, and involve other members of the organization when looking into long-term years in the future.
- There are advantages and disadvantages when deciding if there should be an internal team focused on Futures Studies or if an external consultant should be hired.



Based on these, I developed the following personal insights:

- Because of the comments about having an internal team focused on futures and hiring external vendors, I wonder if there might not be a case made for having both in order to maximize the benefits. This could be also influenced by the existing foresight maturity of the organization and its size. If the organization is very small, it might not make sense to have a dedicated team to think of foresight, also if the level of foresight maturity is very little, it might be the case to have more external participation until the maturity level is increased.
- Marketing departments should invest time and effort in studying different futures when sales are doing well. They should be wary of caring about the future only when sales are slow.
- Futures thinking may work with traditional marketing practices. Different scenarios cause marketers to rethink their existing 4Ps strategies. This helps marketers to take possible futures in consideration when preparing strategies, making their organizations more resilient to the future. There is an argument to be made that futures thinking might resolve the existing criticism that the 4Ps model does not take in consideration external uncontrollable factors.

## A Framework for Future-Proof 4Ps

Based on the insights gathered after analyzing the content of the guided interviews with the marketing professionals, I created a model, represented by figure 12, depicting how organizations can incorporate Futures Studies in their planning.

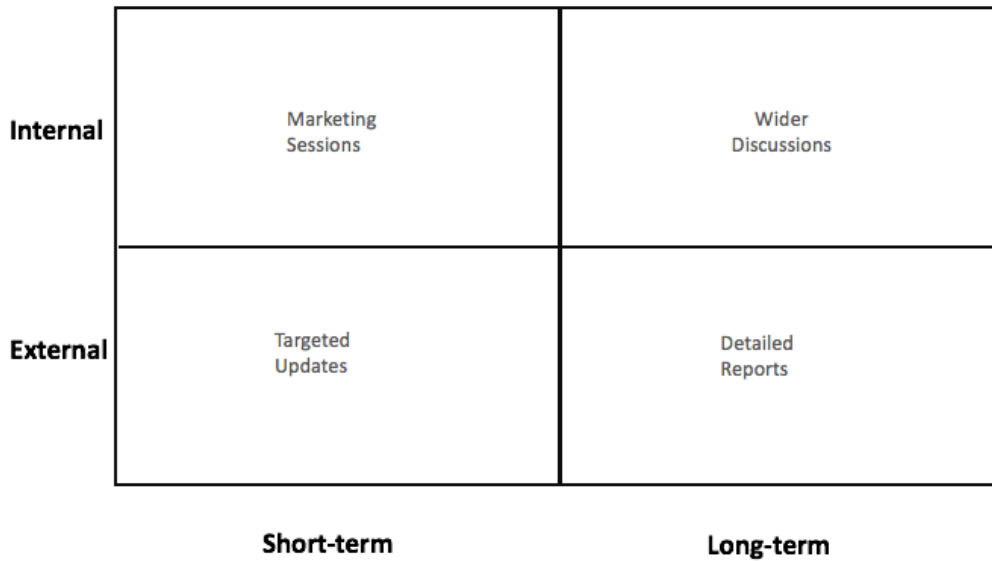


Figure 12 - Model prototype

The vertical axis separated between Internal and External. Internal identifies the organization's internal capacity, while external represents the elements that are external to the organization. I was inspired by Duin's separation of scenarios, introduced in Chapter 2, that is based on what the organization can and cannot influence. The horizontal axis is separated in two different time horizons: short-term and long term.

Terry Grim's Foresight Maturity Model (2009), introduced in Chapter 2, shows the different level of maturity that organization may have, so the model I initially considered had to be altered to consider organizations with different maturity levels, as shown by figure 13:

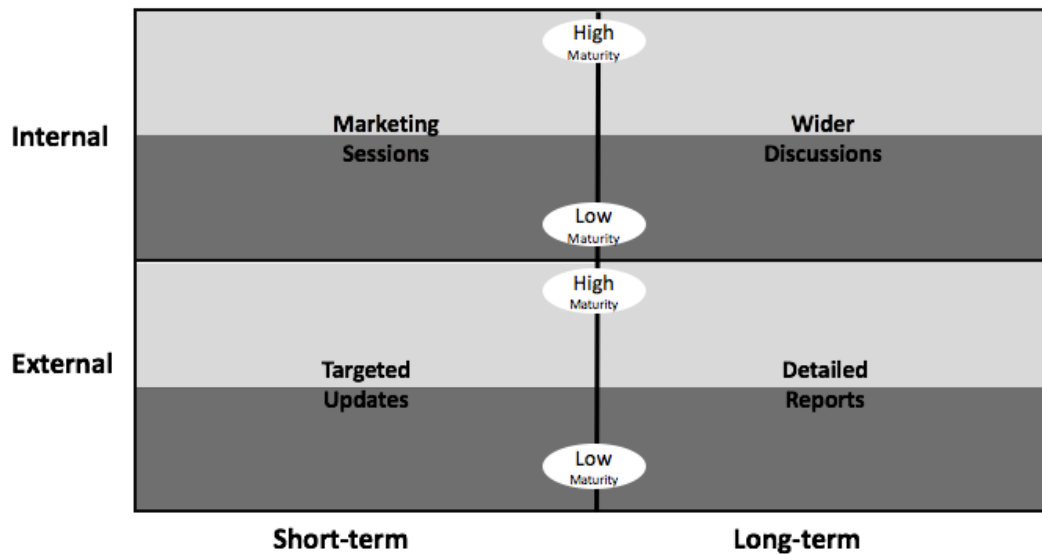


Figure 13 - Framework considering different maturity levels

**(I- ST-LM) Marketing Sessions:** this is a moment for the marketing team to reflect on their internal capabilities and how they make measure against possible changes that might happen in a short-term future. Since the organization has a low maturity for Futures Studies, the organization will have to rely on outside knowledge to guide this discussion. For example, hired consultants could lead a session with the marketing team and prompt them into a productive discussion. If with time and training the organization feels more at ease with futures thinking, they could move towards the next section. The 4Ps model could be used in this stage to guide the discussion.

**(I- ST-HM) Marketing Session:** like the example above, this is an opportunity for the marketing team to get together and discuss possible changes that might happen in 3-5 years' time and how these changes might impact their current marketing strategies. This would be the ideal moment to apply the 4Ps approach for analysing the organization through a futures perspective. The insights generated during by this activity could ultimately lead to more robust strategies.

**(E-ST-LM) Target Updates:** The marketing team in this case might consult outside sources to be updated on changing factors in the short-term future that are external to the organization. For example, the marketing team could receive newsletters created by a foresight consultant or attend seminars on the topic to become better informed. With time or training, the team could move to the next description.

**(E-ST-HM) Target Updates:** Marketing team studies how factors outside the control of their organization can impact their marketing strategy. The information gathered will help them measure if their current marketing strategy will be sufficient to deal with the changes in the near future.

**(I-LT-LM) Futures Discussion:** This is an opportunity for the entire leadership team to get together and discuss possible long-term future scenarios and consider how to adapt or grow their internal capabilities. Since the organization has low maturity towards strategic foresight, this discussion would probably work best with only the leadership team. Once the organization gains more maturity, they could move to the next example:

**(I-LT-HM) Futures Leadership Discussion:** This is an opportunity for the entire organization to get together and discuss possible long-term future scenarios. These might be town-hall-type meetings that break into small heterogeneous groups with members of different departments and on different strata interacting to discuss and promote numerous points of view on how different futures could impact their organization's internal capabilities.

**(E-1LT-LM) Detailed Reports:** The organization consults external data on how possible scenarios and future elements may impact the organization, like new legislation, different environmental aspects, and possible new marketplaces that could be open and explored. This information could be gathered and communicated by a

hired consultant, though it also could be gotten through subscription to a service provided by, for example, a foresight firm or government agency. Given that the organization gains confidence and becomes more mature towards futures thinking, they could move to the next example:

**(E-LT-HM) Detailed Reports:** A specific internal team produces a report dealing with possible external future elements that may impact the organization. This report could then be shared with the organization and be used to guide strategic decisions.

The ideas and examples presented above are summarized on figure 14:

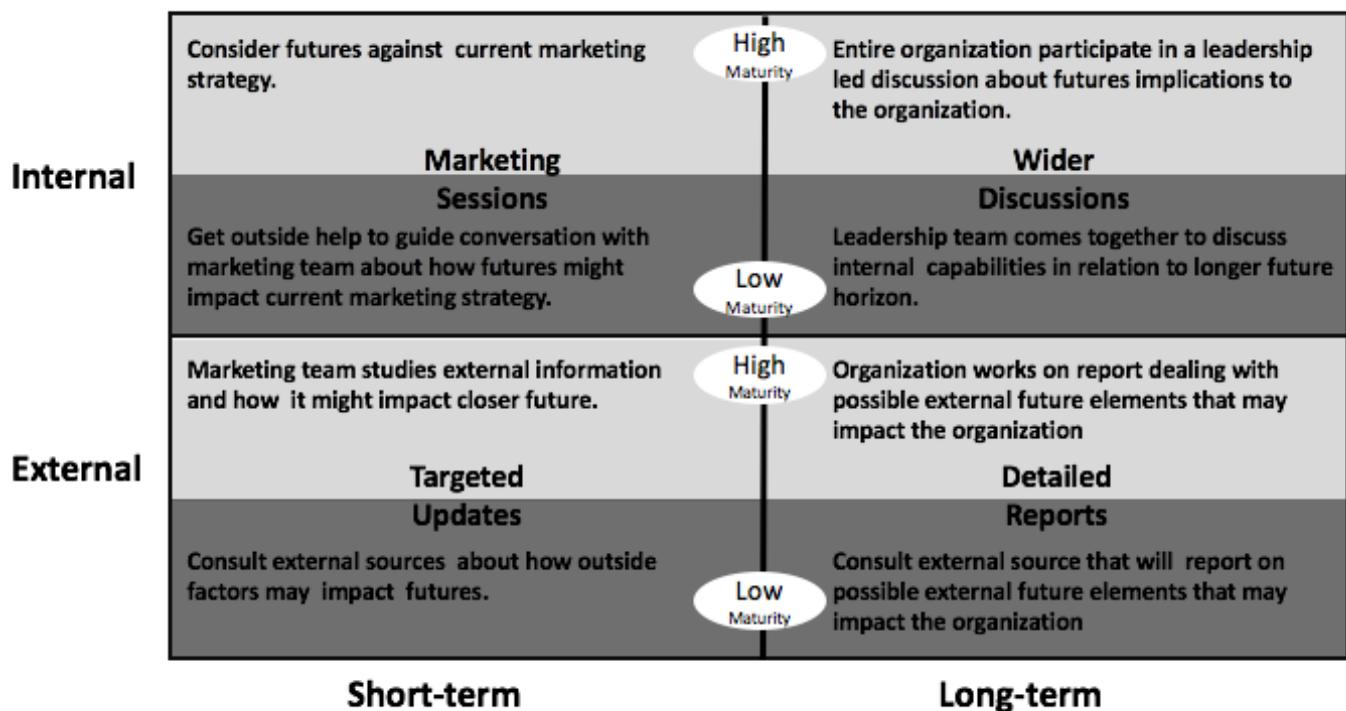


Figure 14 - Framework considering different maturity levels

Upon closer examination of the model, I realized that the different activities for the two levels of maturity could also be adapted depending on the size of the organization. For example, a small company of three employees might be extremely mature in Futures Studies yet lack the time and resources to properly obtain certain information,

so they might choose to rely on external sources to obtain the information needed for their strategy formation. The 4Ps model could be a handy tool to guide the internal sections of the discussions, and to help frame what external factor could influence potential organizational strategies.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusion

“The idea of the future being different from the present is so repugnant to our conventional modes of thought and behaviour that we, most of us, offer a great resistance to acting on it in practice.”

John Maynard Keynes, economist, 1937

According to research conducted on the topic (Doren & Smith, 1999), some businesses have a difficult time properly questioning their assumptions. Their difficulty lies in projecting what the future might hold. To properly question their industry assumptions, organizations must look beyond their internal views about competencies and resource-based allocations. To properly create a future topography, they must take in consideration their consumer and market, and how they are changing. This is where the marketing team can play a vital role in influencing the creation of corporate strategy. Organizations must learn how to properly anticipate and prepare for the future: it is only a matter of time until some significant change will affect their business. Many organizations lack the strategic foresight and futures thinking that may help them avoid trouble ahead (Morrison, 1996). What can be done today to help them strategize for what might happen tomorrow?

This research began with the idea that marketing professionals might benefit by linking Futures Studies with the perhaps outdated but still ubiquitous 4Ps marketing mix. The use of the marketing mix with different futures scenarios might help marketers better assess their current capabilities in relationship to different futures, and to make strategic decisions that will lead to performing better in different scenarios. Futures thinking can empower marketers to identify early signals of changes that might be arriving (Schoemaker, 1995). The results of this research not only indicated that this combination of scenarios and the 4Ps could prove fruitful to marketers, it also provided insights into how marketers and Futures Studies professionals might work together. Chapter 2 presented the criticisms that have been made towards the 4Ps model, one of them being that it doesn't take into consideration uncontrollable external factors (Kotler, 1984) (Schultz, 2001); I believe that bringing a futures perspective into the 4Ps approach could mitigate that criticism, as it could influence marketers to reassess the 4Ps when thinking of outside factors. Not only that, providing a familiar framework can make it easier for marketers to consider the future. The framework this research proposes intends to aid marketing teams and organizations to better adapt to unknown futures, hopefully developing better products and services, regardless of their size and strategic foresight maturity level. The implementation Futures Thinking in an organization will be an additional expense, and it is natural that businesses are concerned about accruing more expenses. I believe that it is important to think of this as an investment: if organizations have advance knowledge of what might happen, be it new opportunities or unforeseen threats, the organization will have the chance to act and maximize the benefits or minimize the costs. I believe that if properly used, Futures Thinking may lead to a positive Return-on-Investment.

## Limitations and Further Research

This study is limited in scope and scale, and cannot be considered exhaustive. This project took place over three months. With additional time and resources, it could have been strengthened by interviewing more marketers, testing other scenarios, and introducing a quantitative data collection element to complement the qualitative interviews. For instance, data gathering could be further expanded by creating an online survey in order to further understand how marketers relate to Futures Studies. This survey could be sent out to broader-range marketers, reaching professionals throughout Canada and abroad.

Due to extraordinary circumstances that further restricted the available time for recruitment, half the interviewees had studied strategic foresight, which most likely introduced a bias towards affirming the value Futures Studies. Additional studies should be conducted with a broader sampling of marketing professionals to better understand the potential of combining the marketing mix with strategic foresight methods. It would be interesting to test combinations of scenarios with other known marketing strategy models, such as BCG Matrix, SWOT analysis, and Porter's Five Forces.

The scenarios presented to participants of this research were chosen without consideration of the participants' organizations' specific products or characteristics. It would be enlightening to test the application of alternative scenarios using a set of different scenarios and different marketing strategy models, including those created



with a specific organization's situation in mind. While there might not exist one model or framework that works equally well for all organizations, each company would do well to find a method that works within its culture and structure.

## Next Steps

The next step for this research is to build a website that will present the data of this research, as well as provide information on strategic foresight/4Ps framework to aid marketing departments in discussing possible futures and how their organization might adapt to them. I also plan on presenting this research to organizations, and possibly organizing sessions with their marketing teams to further explore the 4Ps futures approach. As a member of the AMA (American Marketing Association) and the WFS (World Future Society), I plan on writing articles and sharing with the respective organizations, in hopes of continuously solidifying the bond between marketing and futures thinking. I hope that by nudging marketers to consider different future scenarios, their organizations will succeed in delivering needed products and services under shifting conditions. By starting with the marketing departments, I would look for ways to bring the rest of the organizations into the process.

# Bibliography

Barnett, T. (2012). *Just How Intelligent is the National Intelligence Council's Global Trends 2030?* | *TIME.com*. *TIME.com*. Retrieved 1 February 2017, from <http://nation.time.com/2012/12/21/just-how-intelligent-is-the-national-intelligence-councils-global-trends-2030/>

Bell, W., *Foundations of Futures Studies: Human Science for a New Era*. Vol. 1: History, Purposes and Knowledge, Transaction Pubs, New Brunswick, NJ, 1996.

Borden, N. H. (1964). The Concept of the Marketing Mix, *J. of Advertising Research*, 2, 7-12.

Calof, J., Miller, R., & Jackson, M. (2012, January 24). Towards impactful foresight: Viewpoints from foresight consultants and academics. *Foresight*, 14(1), 82-97. doi:10.1108/14636681211210387

Chatfield, T. (2016, June 5). The trouble with big data? It's called the 'recency bias' Retrieved September 13, 2016, from <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160605-the-trouble-with-big-data-its-called-the-recency-bias>

Cook, K. (2012, September 03). Why marketing matters. Retrieved September 13, 2016, from <http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20120903/printedition/308319974/why-marketing-matters>

Davis, J., Miller, G. J., & Russell, A. (2006). *Information revolution: Using the information evolution model to grow your business*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Duin, P. V. (2016). *Foresight in organizations: Methods and tools* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Routledge.

Forbes Insight. (2011) *Bringing Foresight to Marketing*. [public.dhe.ibm.com/software/marketing-solutions/downloads/wp-forbes-bringing-foresight-to-marketing.pdf](http://public.dhe.ibm.com/software/marketing-solutions/downloads/wp-forbes-bringing-foresight-to-marketing.pdf)

Four P's of marketing. (2006). In C. Pass (Ed.), *Collins Dictionary of business*. London, United Kingdom: Collins. Retrieved from [http://ocadu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/collinsbus/four\\_p\\_s\\_of\\_marketing/0](http://ocadu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/collinsbus/four_p_s_of_marketing/0)

Gonzalez, M. V. (1992). Environmental uncertainty, Futures Studies, and strategic

planning. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 42(4), 335-349.  
doi:10.1016/0040-1625(92)90078-8

Jefferson, M. (2012). Shell scenarios: What really happened in the 1970s and what may be learned for current world prospects. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 79(1), 186-197. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2011.08.007>

Hervé, B. (2011). Scenario planning: managing uncertain futures. *British Journal of Healthcare Management*, 17(11), 516-521.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.12968/bjhc.2011.17.11.516>

Hammoud, Mohamad S. and Douglas P. Nash. "What Corporations Do With Foresight". *European Journal of Futures Research* 2.1 (2014): n. pag. Web. 11 July 2016.

Krashinsky,S. (2014). *Why marketers need to adapt. The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved 27 September 2016, from  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/marketing/brand-loyalty-the-battle-to-make-products-meaningful/article19007892/>

Kotler, P. (1984), *Marketing Management: Analysis, planning and Control*, Fifth edition, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Kumar, V., & Whitney, P. (2007). Daily life, not markets: customer-centered design. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 28(4), 46-58.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02756660710760944>

Luke, R. (2014). *Creative marketing*. Balboa Press AU.

Marketing. (2014). In R. Kroon, A/V A to Z: An encyclopedic dictionary of media, entertainment and other audiovisual terms. Jefferson, NC: McFarland. Retrieved from <http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/mcfav/marketing/0>

Michman, R. (1984). Linking Futuristics With Marketing Planning, Forecasting, And Strategy. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 1(3), 17-23.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/eb008102>

Morrison, J. (1996). *The second curve* (1st ed.). New York: Ballantine Books.

Popper, R. (2008) Foresight Methodology, in Georghiou, L., Cassingena, J., Keenan, M., Miles, I. and Popper, R. (eds.), *The Handbook of Technology Foresight*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 44-88.

Rafiq, M. and Ahmed, P.K. (1992), "The Marketing Mix Reconsidered", *The Marketing Mix Revisited*.

Rafiq, M. and Ahmed, P.K. (1995). "Using the 7Ps as a generic marketing mix, an exploratory survey of UK and European marketing academics", *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 13, n 9. MCB University Press.

Rust, R., Moorman, C., & Bhalla, G. (2010, January). Rethinking Marketing. Retrieved September 13, 2016, from <https://hbr.org/2010/01/rethinking-marketing>

Schoemaker, P. (1995). *Scenario Planning: A Tool for Strategic Thinking*. MIT Sloan Management Review. Retrieved 21 September 2016, from <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/scenario-planning-a-tool-for-strategic-thinking/>

Schultz, W. (2015). A Brief History of Futures. *World Future Review*, 7(4), 324-331. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1946756715627646>

Schultz, D. E. (2001). Marketers: Bid farewell to strategy based on old 4 Ps. *Marketing News*, 35(4), 7.

Schwartz, P. (1991). *The art of the long view*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Vergragt, P. & Quist, J. (2011). *Backcasting for sustainability: Introduction to the special issue*. *Sciencedirect.com*. Retrieved 30 July 2016, from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S004016251100062X>

Schoemaker, P.J.H., and K. van der Heijden. 1992. Integrating scenarios into strategic planning at Royal Dutch/Shell. *Planning Review* 20 (3): 41-6.

Son, H. (2015). The history of Western Futures Studies: An exploration of the intellectual traditions and three-phase periodization. *Futures*, 66(1), 120-137. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2014.12.013>

The Marketing Mix. (2009). In J. Blythe, *Key concepts in marketing*. London, United Kingdom: Sage UK. Retrieved from [http://ocadu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukmark/the\\_marketing\\_mix/0](http://ocadu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukmark/the_marketing_mix/0)

I.D, K. (2012). Marketing mix: An attempt at critical analysis. *Sovremennye Issledovaniâ Social'nyh Problem*, (4)

van Doren, D. & Smith, D. (1999). Scenario Planning: A New Approach to Teaching Marketing Strategy. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 21(2), 146-155. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0273475399212008>

Wilkinson, A., & Kupers, R. (2013). *Living in the Futures*. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved 1 April 2017, from <https://hbr.org/2013/05/living-in-the-futures>

## Appendix A : List of Interviewees

Below is the list of individuals who were interviewed:

Doug Moxon - Principal at dMox marketing communications consultancy  
Ling Din - Product Director at Qudu Education  
Stephen J. Popiel Ph.D. CMRP - Market Research professional.  
Bruno Lira- Film Marketing Expert  
Ziyan Hossain - Product & Marketing Strategist at Qnext  
Chad Lesch - Senior Marketing Designer at Diamond Integrated Marketing  
Adriana Bernardino Ph.D. - Marketing Research Professional at Advanis  
Anonymous - Senior Market Strategist at a large financial institution  
Anonymous- Marketing Manager at a real estate company.  
Anonymous - Brand Strategist at a financial services organization.

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

### Part 1: Introduction and Informed Consent Process

- Confirm name, position at your organization, and the industry you work with?
- Can you provide a brief description about your current role and about the organization you work for?

### Part 2: Familiarity with Foresight and 4Ps.

1. Do you usually think of your work using the 4Ps framework?
2. Please use this blank framework to write down the main elements of your organization using the 4Ps approach.

### Part 3: Activity

1. As explained in the email invitation, for this research we will be using the United State's National Intelligence Agency report with four possible future scenarios for our planet in the year 2030. We will be using two scenarios from their report. Your first scenario will be (insert). We have prepared a brief summary describing it. Please take a few minutes to read it over and let me know if you have any questions.
2. Here is a blank 4P framework and. Imagining you have full control to alter your organization's strategy, how would you adapt your strategies if you were in this scenario?
3. Why do you think this would be different from / the same as your current 4P's framework.

(Repeat with a different scenario)

4. Was this process useful for thinking of marketing strategy?
5. Do you think it is important to think about the future when creating a marketing strategy? Why so/not? Are you optimistic or pessimistic?
6. What is the ideal time horizon in looking at the future? What time horizon you currently use within your organization?
7. How often should you take the time to think how the future might impact your marketing strategy/organization?
8. Should Futures thinking be led by an internal or external team?
9. If you could receive an ideal futures tool or report, what would you like to see in it?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

### Part 4: Conclusion

1. Do you have any questions ?
2. Thank you for participating in this interview. I will remind you that you can contact me at any point between now and \_\_\_\_\_ (1 week after) to retract anything that you shared in this interview or to withdraw entirely.