

# Unveiling the Nexus: Exploring Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator in the Interplay Between Marketing Mix and Customer Loyalty at Petro Stations in Dili, Timor-Leste

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## ABSTRACT

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This investigation meticulously explored the direct impact of the marketing mix on customer loyalty and the indirect influence of customer satisfaction in mediating the association between the marketing mix and customer loyalty. The study, conducted with a sample size of 170 individuals, utilized Smart-PLS 3.0 for rigorous hypothesis testing. The findings elucidate that proficient marketing mix strategies, encompassing elements such as high-quality products, competitive pricing, strategic placement, and personalized promotions, not only contribute to heightened customer satisfaction but also foster increased customer loyalty. Nevertheless, the study underscores the insufficiency of customer satisfaction alone in guaranteeing customer loyalty, highlighting the imperative consideration of additional factors like convenience and interpersonal relationships in the formulation of resilient retention strategies. The research identifies and elucidates upon various limitations that necessitate meticulous consideration for the improvement of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, it accentuates the critical importance of acknowledging cross-cultural disparities in marketing mix strategies, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, underscoring the need for a nuanced and globally aware approach in research and practice.

**Keywords:** Marketing mix, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, petrol station, Dili.

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## 1. Introduction

Customer loyalty is a critical aspect of business success as it enables revenue growth, brand reputation building, customer feedback provision, marketing cost reduction, and improved customer experience. In this regard, researchers and businesses must address the challenges associated with customer loyalty to build long-term relationships with their customers and drive long-term success. Relationship marketing theory emphasizes the need for businesses to establish long-term relationships with customers to create loyalty. This can be achieved by offering excellent customer service, personalized experiences, and ongoing communication to establish trust and rapport with customers.

Customer loyalty refers to the extent to which customers repeatedly choose to do business with a particular company or brand. Loyal customers are more likely to engage in repeat purchases, provide positive feedback, refer friends and family, pay premium prices, and promote a business through word-of-mouth recommendations. Customer loyalty can be influenced by various factors, including product/service quality, brand, trust, marketing mix, and satisfaction. This research focuses specifically on the marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and loyalty and their relationships.

The marketing mix refers to the set of controllable tactical marketing tools and variables that a company uses to elicit a desired response from its target market. The marketing mix comprises product, price, promotion, and place. It is essential for retaining customer satisfaction and loyalty as it enables businesses to develop strategies that meet their customers' needs and wants. By creating a marketing mix tailored to their target market's specific needs and preferences, businesses can build

stronger relationships with their customers and drive satisfaction and loyalty (Lee & Kotler, 2021).

Empirical research has established a strong connection between the marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Companies can drive growth by developing marketing mix strategies that prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty through high-quality products, competitive pricing, convenient distribution channels, and personalized promotions (Mostafa, 2019; Gheorghe & Cojocaru, 2020; Jha & Joshi, 2021). However, there are also several empirical debates surrounding the relationship between marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Firstly, low prices are not the only way to drive customer loyalty, as product quality and customer service can also be crucial factors (Netemeyer et al., 2018). Secondly, satisfied customers may switch to competitors for reasons beyond satisfaction, such as convenience or personal relationships. Thirdly, loyalty programs may incentivize customers to switch between programs for rewards rather than fostering true loyalty (Mostafa, 2019). Fourthly, while cross-cultural differences in marketing mix strategies, customer satisfaction, and loyalty are recognized as important, the specific cultural factors that impact these variables remain poorly understood (Kwak et al., 2021). Fifthly, social media has become a vital marketing channel, yet there is still a research gap in understanding how social media interactions impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kwak et al., 2021). Finally, emotional factors, such as brand identity and social responsibility, are increasingly recognized as important drivers of customer loyalty (Acquaah & Quay, 2021).

The relationship between marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and loyalty is complex and multifaceted,

necessitating ongoing research to fully comprehend the factors that drive customer behavior. Addressing the gaps in understanding these variables is critical to developing effective marketing strategies that enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty and drive business growth. The objective of this study is to investigate the direct impact of marketing mix on customer loyalty and examine the role of customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in the relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty. By doing so, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that drive customer behavior and inform the development of effective marketing strategies that enhance customer loyalty and drive business growth.

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks, Research Model and Hypothesis

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

#### 2.1.1. Marketing Mix and Customer Loyalty

The marketing mix is an integral part of the marketing which refers to the controllable elements that companies use to promote their products or services in the market. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2021), the marketing mix is a controllable and tactical marketing tools (product, price, place, and promotion) that a firm blend to produce the response it wants in the target market. Research has shown that a marketing mix strategy focusing on quality, value, convenience, and effective communication can result in strong and long-lasting relationships with customers and lead to business growth (Herington et al., 2018; Rahi et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020). To achieve marketing objectives and enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability, companies must effectively manage their marketing mix.

Researchers have extensively debated the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty. Some scholars argue that relying solely on low prices is insufficient to drive customer loyalty, emphasizing the importance of product quality and customer service. To foster loyalty, businesses should prioritize creating positive customer experiences and building trust (Yoo et al., 2016; Paraskevas and Vrontis, 2017). Customer loyalty may also be influenced by factors such as accessibility and personal connections (Deng et al., 2010; Nadeem et al., 2018). The effectiveness of loyalty programs in driving true loyalty is debatable, as some researchers suggest they may incentivize customers to switch between programs rather than fostering true loyalty (Liu and Yang, 2019; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2021). Although cultural differences impact marketing mix strategies, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, the specific factors affecting these variables are poorly understood (Hanaysha et al., 2021; O'Cass and Ngo, 2022). Emotional factors such as brand identity and social responsibility are increasingly recognized as drivers of customer loyalty, and businesses should consider these when developing marketing mix strategies (Hussain et al., 2021; Kim and Kim, 2021).

Recent studies have indicated that companies can enhance customer loyalty by utilizing marketing mix elements such as high-quality products, fair prices, effective promotional

activities, and accessible distribution channels (Saeidi et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2021). These strategies can be used to build long-term customer relationships by delivering customer value through the provision of high-quality products, fair prices, excellent customer service, and easy product accessibility (Gronroos, 1984; Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). However, research also suggests that while price has a significant effect on customer loyalty, the impact of product, promotion, and place may be insignificant (Grisaffe et al., 2007; Hamin et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important for companies to consider the specific mix of marketing elements that influence customer loyalty in their particular industry, market, and customer base. In addition, companies should be mindful of methodological, contextual, and individual differences that can affect the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty (Saeidi et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2021).

Studies on the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty have yielded inconsistent results due to several factors. The inconsistencies may be due to differences in methodologies, research designs, sampling methods, and data analysis techniques used in different studies (Hu et al., 2009; Abd Wahab et al., 2016). The effectiveness of the marketing mix can also vary depending on contextual factors, such as the industry and market (Chang and Wang, 2011; Paraskevas and Katsikas, 2015). Additionally, individual customer characteristics, such as their involvement with the product or brand, preferences, and attitudes, can also affect the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty (Jones and Sasser Jr, 1995; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998). It is important to consider these factors when examining the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty (Gabbioneta et al., 2021; Hanaysha).

#### 2.1.2. Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction

Several studies have demonstrated the significant influence of marketing mix elements such as product, price, place, and promotion on customer satisfaction through value delivery, relationship establishment, attribution influence, and expectation meeting. Chen and Ching (2020) and Cheung and To (2015) have found the positive effects of product quality, price fairness, and service quality on customer satisfaction in the food and beverage and retail industries, respectively. The value-based marketing theory has emphasized the importance of delivering superior value to customers through high-quality products, fair prices, excellent customer service, and easy accessibility, which have been supported by Zhang and Ma (2020) and Pappu et al. (2011) in the hospitality and banking industries. Moreover, personalization is a crucial aspect of relationship marketing, and personalized marketing has been found to positively impact customer satisfaction in the retail and banking industries, respectively, as demonstrated by Wang et al. (2020) and Akroush et al. (2020).

Recent empirical studies have investigated the relationship between marketing mix elements and customer satisfaction in various contexts. Xu and Li (2020) conducted research on fast fashion and revealed that product quality and price had a substantial effect on customer satisfaction, whereas promotion

had no significant impact. Bista et al. (2021) studied mobile banking services and discovered that while service quality significantly influenced customer satisfaction, the impact of price was not significant. These studies suggest that the influence of marketing mix elements on customer satisfaction may differ depending on the industry and context. Companies in the fast fashion industry, for example, should focus on offering high-quality products at fair prices rather than investing heavily in promotional activities. Similarly, mobile banking services should prioritize service quality over price to improve customer satisfaction. By understanding the varying impacts of marketing mix elements in different contexts, companies can better allocate their resources and efforts to optimize customer satisfaction and gain a competitive advantage.

### 2.1.3. Customer satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction refers to a customer's overall evaluation of their experience with a product or service, based on their expectations and perceptions of quality, value, and performance (Kotler et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction plays a critical role in building and maintaining customer loyalty, which is essential for businesses to achieve long-term success in today's competitive marketplace (Verhoef et al., 2015; So et al., 2020; Arshad et al., 2021).

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that customer satisfaction is a significant determinant of customer loyalty, which in turn leads to repeat business and positive recommendations (Lee et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2021). This is because satisfied customers tend to develop more positive attitudes towards a company (Söderlund, 2018). Additionally, they are more likely to forgive occasional service failures or product defects and continue doing business with the company (Zineldin, 2016). Satisfied customers are also likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations, which can enhance the company's reputation (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In sum, these findings highlight the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction as a critical factor for building customer loyalty and achieving long-term success in today's highly competitive marketplace.

Although many studies have shown a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, some recent studies have reported insignificant or weak relationships between the two constructs (Balaji et al., 2017; Lee and Kim, 2020). These findings suggest that the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty may vary depending on the specific context and industry, brand reputation, trust, and switching costs, and mechanisms and contextual factors.

The inconsistent results of existing empirical studies on the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty can be attributed to several factors, including the specific context and industry, differences in measurement scales, and moderating factors such as brand reputation, trust, and switching costs. For example, a study by Chathoth and colleagues (2016) found that the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is stronger in the hotel industry than in the restaurant industry, suggesting that industry-specific factors can play a role in the relationship. Additionally, differences in the measurement scales used to assess customer satisfaction and

loyalty can lead to inconsistent results across studies (Peterson & Wilson, 2018). Moderating factors such as brand reputation, trust, and switching costs can also influence the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, a study by Lee and colleagues (2021) found that brand reputation moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, with higher brand reputation strengthening the relationship. Another study by Lam and colleagues (2019) found that trust mediates the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that trust can play a critical role in the relationship.

### 2.1.4. Marketing Mix, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping the marketing mix and building customer loyalty. When customers are satisfied with a company's products or services, they are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat business, leading to increased customer loyalty and lifetime value (Hasan et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020).

In terms of the marketing mix, customer satisfaction can impact several components. For example, it can influence product design and development by providing insights into customers' preferences and needs (Söderlund, 2018). It can also affect pricing strategies, with satisfied customers being willing to pay a premium for high-quality products or services (Ladhari, 2018). Additionally, customer satisfaction can inform promotional strategies by providing feedback on the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and channels (Zineldin, 2016).

Empirical evidence supports the importance of customer satisfaction in building customer loyalty and shaping the marketing mix. For instance, studies have found a positive and significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in various contexts, including hospitality (Chathoth et al., 2016), online reviews and social media (Jia et al., 2021), and e-commerce (Lee et al., 2021). Additionally, research has highlighted the role of customer satisfaction in shaping various aspects of the marketing mix, such as pricing (Ladhari, 2018) and product design (Söderlund, 2018). Overall, the empirical evidence suggests that customer satisfaction is a critical factor for businesses to consider in building customer loyalty and shaping their marketing mix strategies.

Recent debates on marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and loyalty revolve around the evolving nature of the marketplace and the need for businesses to adapt to changing consumer preferences and behaviors. One area of debate is the role of digital technology in shaping the marketing mix and influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty. For example, a study by Nguyen and colleagues (2020) found that e-service quality and website design significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty in e-commerce. Another area of debate is the importance of emotional factors in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty. Research has suggested that emotional factors such as empathy, trust, and attachment can play a crucial role in building customer loyalty (Kumar et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). However, there is also debate around the most effective

strategies for incorporating emotional factors into the marketing mix. Furthermore, there is ongoing discussion around the role of customer experience in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty. Some researchers have argued that customer experience, which encompasses all interactions that a customer has with a company, is a critical factor in building customer loyalty (Verhoef et al., 2015). However, others have questioned the extent to which customer experience can be effectively measured and managed in practice (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

## 2.2. Conceptual Framework and Research Model

Several theoretical and empirical frameworks have been utilized to explore the connection between marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The Service Quality Model proposes that customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by marketing mix elements and service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model suggests that customer satisfaction is impacted by the difference between their expectations and perceptions of service received (Oliver, 1980). The Relationship Marketing Model highlights the importance of building strong relationships with customers through trust, commitment, and communication (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Finally, the Social Exchange Theory emphasizes that customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by perceived benefits and costs associated with the exchange between customers and companies (Blau, 1964).

The research model was also build based on the recent empirical studies have employed these frameworks to investigate the relationship between marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. For instance, Lee and colleagues (2021) used the Service Quality Model to explore the impact of marketing mix elements on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the e-commerce industry. Fathullah et al. (2020) utilized the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model to examine the influence of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the airline industry.

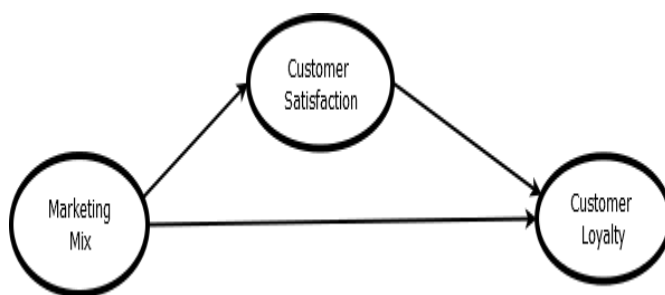


Figure 1. Research Model

## 2.3. Hypotheses

### 2.3.1. Marketing Mix and Customer Loyalty

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that customer satisfaction is a significant determinant of customer loyalty, which in turn leads to repeat business and positive

recommendations (Lee et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2021). This is because satisfied customers tend to develop more positive attitudes towards a company (Söderlund, 2018). Additionally, they are more likely to forgive occasional service failures or product defects and continue doing business with the company (Zineldin, 2016). Satisfied customers are also likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations, which can enhance the company's reputation (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Therefore, this research formulates the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive and significant effect of marketing mix on customer loyalty.

### 2.3.2. Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction

Several studies have demonstrated the significant influence of marketing mix elements such as product, price, place, and promotion on customer satisfaction through value delivery, relationship establishment, attribution influence, and expectation meeting. Chen and Ching (2020) and Cheung and To (2015) have found the positive effects of product quality, price fairness, and service quality on customer satisfaction in the food and beverage and retail industries, respectively. Therefore, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a positive and significant effect of marketing mix on customer satisfaction.

### 2.3.3. Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that customer satisfaction is a significant determinant of customer loyalty, which in turn leads to repeat business and positive recommendations (Lee et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2021). This is because satisfied customers tend to develop more positive attitudes towards a company (Söderlund, 2018). Additionally, they are more likely to forgive occasional service failures or product defects and continue doing business with the company (Zineldin, 2016). Satisfied customers are also likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations, which can enhance the company's reputation (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Therefore, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive and significant effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty.

### 2.3.4. Marketing Mix, Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Empirical evidence supports the importance of customer satisfaction in building customer loyalty and shaping the marketing mix. For instance, studies have found a positive and significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in various contexts, including hospitality (Chathoth et al., 2016), online reviews and social media (Jia et al., 2021), and e-commerce (Lee et al., 2021). Additionally, research has highlighted the role of customer satisfaction in shaping various aspects of the marketing mix, such as pricing (Ladhari, 2018) and product design (Söderlund, 2018). Therefore, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Customer satisfaction plays significant role in the relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty.

### 3. Research Method

A total of 200 customers of Tiger Fuel Petro Station, Dili, Timor-Leste, were chosen to participate in the research study using accidental sampling, commonly referred to as convenience sampling. This technique involves selecting research participants who are easily available or accessible, without any predefined criteria. The rationale for selecting the 200 respondents was due to their presence at the Tiger Fuel Station during the time of the study.

The data collection process involved the use of questionnaires that were developed based on a prior study. To ensure that respondents fully comprehended the questions and to minimize any potential misunderstandings, the questions were translated into Tetun, which is the official language of Timor-Leste. The questionnaires were designed to measure each variable using a Likert scale, consisting of five scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree).

A total of 200 questionnaires were personally delivered to customers to participate in the study, where the research objectives were explained to them. Out of the 200 questionnaires, 170 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 68%. The 170 questionnaires that were returned were deemed valid and usable for the data analysis process.

The data analysis for the study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines set forth by Hair et al. (2021) for testing both the outer model measurement and inner model measurement using Smart-PLS 3.0. For the outer model measurement, the assessment of validity and reliability were employed. Validity was further divided into two categories: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was measured using two parameters, namely outer

loading (OL) and average variance extracted (AVE). An item was considered valid if the OL value was higher than 0.7, and the AVE value was more than 0.5. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion (FL) as per Hair et al. (2019) and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) as per Henseler et al. (2015).

To test the hypotheses, Smart-PLS 3.0 software was utilized to measure the path coefficient. A relationship between variables was considered positive and significant if the T-value was above 1.96 and the P-value was below 0.05. These criteria were used to determine the statistical significance of the path coefficients, indicating the presence of a significant relationship between the variables being analyzed.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Validity

The assessment of convergent validity was conducted using Smart-PLS, and the results, as depicted in Figure 2 and Table, indicated that all items had an outer loading (OL) value above the threshold of 0.7 and an average variance extracted (AVE) value above 0.5. These findings imply that all items were considered valid for measuring the inner model, and the variables being analyzed were accurately represented by their respective indicators.

Discriminant validity was assessed using two methods: Fornell-Larcker Criterion (FL) and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT). The results of the analysis, presented in Table I, showed that the FL values met the recommended criterion outlined by Hair et al. (2021). Additionally, the HTMT values, as presented in Table II, were found to be below 0.90, meeting the recommended threshold as suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). These results indicate that all items demonstrated sufficient discriminant validity, indicating that they were able to test the inner model effectively.

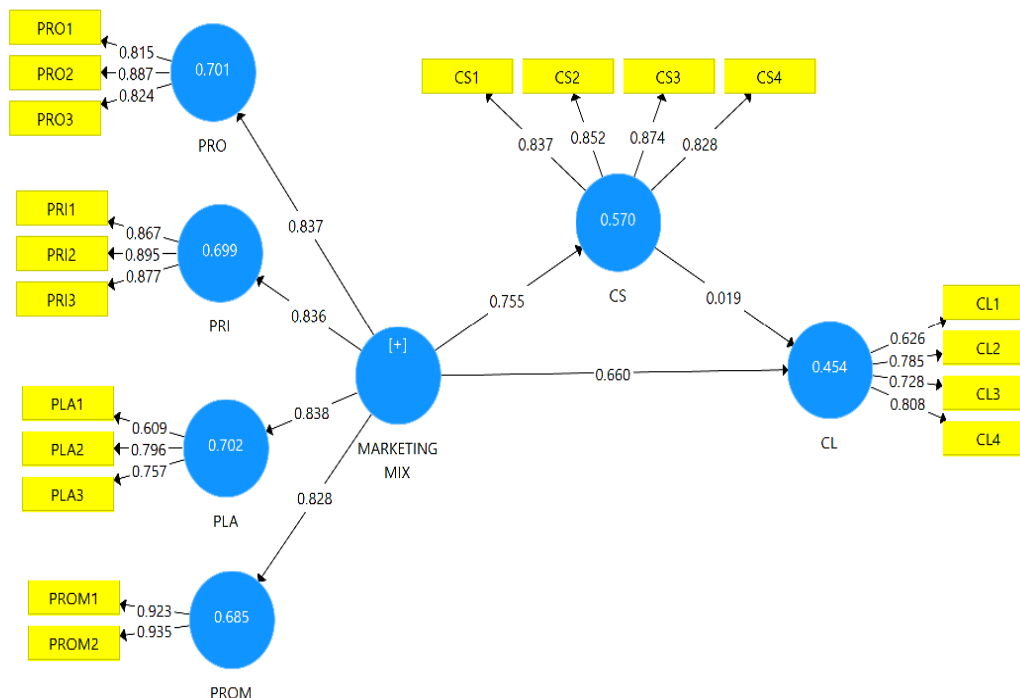


Figure 2. The assessment and findings of convergent validity, as conducted through Smart-PLS

Table I. Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Item	CL	CS	PLA	PRI	PRO	PROM
CL	0,734					
CS	0,503	0,847				
PLA	0,523	0,685	0,730			
PRI	0,584	0,598	0,585	0,877		
PRO	0,646	0,634	0,596	0,617	0,844	
PROM	0,505	0,641	0,598	0,579	0,609	0,933

Table II. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) for Discriminant Test

Item	CL	CS	PLA	PRI	PRO	PROM
CL						
CS	0,631					
PLA	0,814	0,894				
PRI	0,743	0,694	0,841			
PRO	0,852	0,758	0,854	0,745		
PROM	0,651	0,742	0,825	0,683	0,737	

4.1.2. Reliability

Reliability testing was conducted using two parameters: Cronbach’s Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). The results, as presented in Table III, indicated that all items had CA and CR values above the recommended threshold value of

0.7, meeting the criteria set by Hair et al. (2021). These findings suggest that the indicators utilized in the study were reliable and consistent in measuring their respective constructs.

Table III. CA, CR and AVE values

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CL	0,713	0,823	0,539
CS	0,869	0,911	0,718
PLA	0,566	0,772	0,533
PRI	0,850	0,909	0,769
PRO	0,797	0,881	0,712
PROM	0,852	0,931	0,871

4.1.3. Hypothesis Test

Table IV displays the outcomes of the path analysis carried out using Smart-PLS 3.0. It shows the correlations between Marketing Mix (MARK. MIX) and customer loyalty (CL), as well as between customer satisfaction (CS) and customer loyalty (CL). Marketing Mix has a substantial positive influence on customer loyalty, as indicated by the T-value (9.796) and P-value (0.000), hence supporting H<sub>1</sub>. Moreover, Marketing Mix has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction, with the T-value (23.798) and P-value (0.000), thus supporting H<sub>2</sub>. However, customer satisfaction has no substantial effect on customer loyalty, with the T-value (0.623) and P-value (0.533), leading to the rejection of H<sub>3</sub>.

Table IV. Path Coefficient for Hypothesis Test

Effect	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values	Note
MARK.MIX -> CL	0,724	0,744	0,074	9,796	0,000	Significant
MARK.MIX -> CS	0,768	0,776	0,032	23,798	0,000	Significant
CS -> CL	-0,053	-0,069	0,085	0,623	0,533	Insignificant
MARK.MIX -> CS -> CL	-0,041	-0,054	0,066	0,612	0,541	Insignificant

The Smart-PLS test revealed that there is no mediation effect, as customer satisfaction does not significantly influence the relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty. This is supported by the T-value (0.612) and P-value (0.541) presented in Table IV, which leads to the rejection of H<sub>4</sub>.

#### 4.2. Discussions

The first objective of this research was to investigate the impact of marketing mix on customer loyalty, and the findings indicate that marketing mix has a significant effect on customer loyalty. This implies that when a fuel station utilizes a good combination of product, price, place, and promotion, it can enhance customer loyalty. This result is consistent with previous empirical studies that have shown that marketing mix has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction (Adnan & Husain, 2019; Khaliq et al., 2019; Mohan & Bhardwaj, 2021; Kumar & Yadav, 2021; Ammar et al., 2021) because the company has the ability to design marketing mix to meet customers' needs and expectations, differentiate its product or service from competitors, and create a positive customer experience and perception of the brand (Oyewole & Adebayo, 2021; Tiba & Abid, 2021; Almeida et al., 2021). However, the results of this study are contrary to numerous empirical studies that have revealed that marketing mix has an insignificant effect on customer loyalty (Lee et al., 2021; Almajali & Al-Soub, 2021; Singh & Singh, 2021) because customers may be highly price-sensitive (Huang & Huang, 2018; Truong et al., 2020), lack of product differentiation (Park & Yang, 2017; Datta & Ailawadi, 2019), poor customer service (Anderson et al., 2004; Pástor et al., 2021).

The second objective of this research was to investigate the impact of the marketing mix on customer satisfaction. The findings indicate that the marketing mix has a significant effect on customer satisfaction. This suggests that Fuel Station has successfully implemented a well-rounded combination of product, price, place, and promotion strategies, which have contributed to improving customer satisfaction. This can be done by meeting or even surpassing customer expectations, providing value, and creating positive perceptions of their products or services, Fuel Station has been able to enhance the overall customer experience (Kotler and Armstrong, 2016). With these insights, the company can continue to fine-tune their marketing mix to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study confirm previous empirical studies revealed that marketing mix play significant role in enhancing customer satisfaction (Adnan & Husain, 2019; Khaliq et al.,

2019; Mohan & Bhardwaj, 2021) because via marketing mix, company can offer and align product and services based on customer needs, enhance value perceptions, differentiate themselves from competitors, and communicate the benefits of their products or services. However, the result of this study is also not in line with numerous empirical studies which revealed that marketing mix has no significant on customer satisfaction (Lee et al., 2021; Almajali et al., 2021) because price sensitivity, poor customer service and lack of product and service differentiation (Datta & Ailawadi, 2019; Lee et al., 2021; Almajali & Al-Soub, 2021; Truong et al., 2020; Pástor et al., 2021).

The third objective of this study aimed to examine the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Surprisingly, the findings suggest that customer satisfaction has an insignificant effect on customer loyalty. This implies that customer satisfaction alone may not significantly contribute to customer loyalty, as customers might lose trust and confidence in the products or services offered by the company. This finding aligns with a previous empirical study by Gürbüz (2008) that also found an insignificant relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Several factors may contribute to this result, including customers' preference for price over product quality, negative experiences with the product or service, and low switching costs that encourage customers to explore alternative options. However, it is important to note that the majority of empirical studies in the field demonstrate a significant positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (Famiyeh et al., 2018; Kaur & Soch, 2018; Carranza et al., 2018; Carneiro et al., 2019). Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that companies typically strive to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction in order to foster customer loyalty. This pursuit of satisfaction is driven by the numerous benefits such as repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and customer advocacy.

The fourth objective of this research was to examine the mediation impact of customer satisfaction on the relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty, and the findings indicate that customer satisfaction has an insignificant effect on marketing mix and customer loyalty. The result of this study is not in line with previous empirical studies that revealed customer satisfaction has significant role in mediation the relationship between product quality and customer loyalty (Rua et al., 2020).

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the impact of the marketing mix on customer loyalty and satisfaction. The findings emphasize the significance of a well-rounded combination of product, price, place, and promotion in significantly enhancing customer loyalty and satisfaction. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these results may not align with all existing empirical studies, indicating the need for further research in the field. The study also reveals that customer satisfaction alone may not be sufficient to drive customer loyalty, as various factors such as price sensitivity, negative experiences, and low switching costs can influence customer behavior. Nevertheless, companies should still prioritize delivering high levels of customer satisfaction, as it can lead to repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and customer advocacy.

This study also investigates the mediating influence of customer satisfaction on the association between the marketing mix and customer loyalty. However, the findings suggest that customer satisfaction exerts an insignificant effect on the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty. This outcome contrasts with prior research that consistently established a significant and positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. The observed disparity in results raises questions about the nuanced dynamics at play in the interconnection between marketing mix components, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, prompting further exploration and consideration of contextual factors that may contribute to these variations.

The findings of this study have important implications. First, they contribute to the existing empirical research by highlighting the significance of a comprehensive marketing mix, including product, price, place, and promotion, in enhancing customer loyalty and satisfaction. These findings provide support for the effectiveness of a well-rounded marketing strategy in achieving positive customer outcomes. Second, the contrasting results with previous studies suggest that the relationship between the marketing mix and customer loyalty/satisfaction may vary depending on contextual factors. Further research is needed to explore these contextual factors and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship.

Moreover, the study challenges the conventional belief that customer satisfaction alone directly leads to customer loyalty. The presence of price sensitivity, negative experiences, and low switching costs as influencing factors indicates that customer loyalty is influenced by a complex interplay of multiple variables. Future research should investigate these factors in different industries and contexts to better comprehend their impact on customer loyalty.

From a practical standpoint, companies should recognize the importance of implementing a comprehensive marketing mix that considers product, price, place, and promotion. This entails offering high-quality products, competitive pricing, convenient distribution channels, and effective promotional strategies to enhance customer loyalty and satisfaction. Additionally, while customer satisfaction is crucial, this study highlights the need for

companies to address other factors such as price sensitivity, negative experiences, and switching costs to foster stronger customer loyalty. This may involve improving pricing strategies, promptly resolving customer issues, and implementing loyalty programs.

It is also important for companies not to solely rely on customer satisfaction as an indicator of loyalty. A more nuanced approach that considers other influential factors is recommended. This can be achieved through the implementation of customer feedback mechanisms, conducting comprehensive customer experience analyses, and exploring alternative mediators of customer loyalty.

Lastly, managers and marketers should remain updated on the evolving research in this field. The inconsistent findings regarding the mediation effect of customer satisfaction on loyalty highlight the need for further investigation. Staying informed about the latest research can assist companies in identifying new insights and adjusting their marketing strategies accordingly.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

While the research provides valuable insights into the impact of marketing mix on customer loyalty and satisfaction, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. These limitations provide opportunities for future research to expand and enhance our understanding of this complex relationship. Some limitations and suggestions for future research include:

- a) **Sample Size and Generalizability:** The study might have a limited sample size or focus on a specific context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could employ larger and more diverse samples to increase the external validity of the results.
- b) **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study may have employed a cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design to assess changes in customer loyalty and satisfaction over time and explore the causal relationships between variables.
- c) **Mediation Mechanisms:** The study examined the mediation effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty. Future research could explore additional mediators, such as brand image, trust, or perceived value, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms influencing customer loyalty.
- d) **Customer Segmentation:** The study might not have considered the heterogeneity among customers. Future research could explore customer segmentation to understand how the impact of marketing mix on loyalty and satisfaction varies across different customer groups, such as demographics, psychographics, or behavioral segments.
- e) **Competitive Context:** The study did not extensively examine the competitive context, which could play a significant role in customer loyalty. Future research could consider the influence of competitive forces, such



as the presence of strong alternatives or market dynamics, on the relationship between marketing mix, satisfaction, and loyalty.

- f) **Mediating Role of Satisfaction:** While the study explored the mediating role of customer satisfaction, future research could investigate other potential mediators, such as customer engagement, perceived quality, or perceived value, to gain a more nuanced understanding of the underlying processes driving customer loyalty.
- g) **Multichannel and Digital Marketing:** The study might not have considered the impact of multichannel and digital marketing efforts on customer loyalty and satisfaction. Future research could explore the role of various marketing channels and digital platforms in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors.

By addressing these limitations and conducting further research, scholars can enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between marketing mix, customer loyalty, and satisfaction. These insights can provide practical implications for businesses to refine their marketing strategies, better meet customer needs, and foster long-term loyalty and satisfaction.

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