
Analysis on the effect of Marketing Mix on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in the Hospitality Industry of Ethiopia: Using Structural Equation Model.

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Abstract

In contemporary service marketing strategy, more attention has been given to the very concept of the 7ps marketing mix as a package and are believed to be crucial tools to bring about Customer satisfaction and loyalty thereby maximize company's performance. Having this into account, the study mainly aims at examining the impact of marketing mix and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty of hotel industry in Ethiopia. The study used 387 participants who were staying in some selected 3star hotels during the time of data collection and randomly approached using self-administered questionnaire. Structural equation model, specifically exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to analyze the data. To this end, findings of the study showed that marketing mix and customer satisfaction has positive significant effect on customer loyalty. The study gives a clue to hospitality marketers that better engagement on marketing mix and customer satisfaction are best ways to ensure sustainable customer loyalty.

Key words: Marketing mix, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Hospitality industry.

1. Introduction

Service industry is considered as one of the largest and fastest growing global economic sectors. It is a substantial contributor to national and local economies all over the world, and it is rapidly being advocated as a key player in achieving development goals by generating more employment opportunities for countries. People-oriented services like tourism, hospitality, and leisure services have distinct qualities, as well as evaluation and care for client happiness (Reisinger,

2001). The hotel industry encompasses a wide range of services, including lodging, dining, cafés, and catering. Hotel business, particularly classed hotels in a developing country like Ethiopia, is inextricably related to the tourism industry, because overseas travellers account for the bulk of the sector's customers (G/egziabher, 2015). The hotel and tourist business stands apart from other services like banking and insurance because of its emotional, aspirational, and aesthetic appeal. Customers with essential feelings such as comfortable, secure, elegant, welcome, and relaxed, according to Barsky and Nash (2002), require a customer-oriented marketing mix approach.

In contrast to other services, the hospitality sector is built on the host–guest interaction, which has social and cultural connotations, as opposed to other services, which are primarily centred on the commercial manager–customer relationship (Hemmington, 2007). In marketing, there is a new paradigm that emphasizes personalized services and focuses on consumer knowledge and information to develop strong partnerships. Providing personalized services necessitates the collection of knowledge and information, such as client purchase habits and reaction to marketing efforts, in order to comprehend various sorts of customers.

The marketing mix is one of the most often utilized tactics for providing firms with a variety of options for bringing their product or service to market. Borden (1965) claims to be the first to use the term marketing mix, but E. J McCarthy defines it as "a combination of all the factors that marketing managers put on the agenda to satisfy and meet the needs of the target market," which includes the four dimensions of product, price, place, and promotion."

According to Kotler and Keller (2012), marketing mix is a technique used by a corporation to persuade customers to buy their product in order to generate money. Despite widespread acceptance of the combination as a serious theoretical and practical parameter of recent marketing, scholars (Lauterborn,1990;Moller,2006;Popovic,2006;Fakedeas,2008) continue to debate the number and naming of additional marketing mix. It is worth mentioning Booms and Bitner (1981), who dealt with service marketing expanded into 7Ps that include people, process, and physical evidence (Gronroos, 1987). The successive Ps have failed to overcome a lack of agreement on eligibility and practical applicability (Kent and Brown,2006). As a result, the three additional marketing mix aspects are mostly employed in service marketing.

In the hotel industry, the marketing mix has become a focus area for operations and research (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). In other words, hotel marketers use items and services to develop loyalty merchandising in the hopes of convincing consumers to repurchase a product or use a service. To suit the different demands of clients, there is a global trend demonstrating a growth in the number and quality of hotel services with new marketing strategies. The marketing mix's many aspects have a significant impact on the service's ability to achieve its aim. The marketing mix refers to the numerous variables of various targeted strategies aimed at increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Researchers (Aldyanza Y., Rita N., &Faiz S. (2015); Achmad M. &Sugeng, P.,2018; Zineldin&Philipson, 2007) have shown a strong link between marketing mix and consumer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is a corporate activity that focuses on creating value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and showing the capacity and responsibility to meet their demands. In their book on marketing management, Kotler and Keller (2012) present a more extensive explanation of customer satisfaction; they describe customer satisfaction as "a person's feeling." As a result of comparing the results to expectations, customer satisfaction may be characterized as a feeling of pleasure or disappointment.

Customer loyalty is described as a deep-seated internal commitment that leads to future repurchase or patronization of a favored product or service, despite external circumstances that may trigger switching behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to Day (1969), loyalty has both behavioral and attitudinal components, implying that it is a combined approach.

According to the literature review, there is still unresolved discussion among researchers on the number of aspects of the marketing mix that is significant to the service business. Despite the fact that many researchers favor the extension of the standard 4Ps, a significant number of marketing experts continue to advocate for the addition of the 3Ps. The master piece by Booms and Bitner (1981), which seeks to structure the 7Ps as a service marketing package, might be evidence of these realities and utilised as a theoretical foundation for the research. Furthermore, most past research has focused on the classic or basic marketing mix components, which include the 4Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, and Place), with just a handful using the seven 7ps in the hotel sector and associated service industries. As a consequence, the findings of this study have the potential to significantly contribute to balancing the dispute among scholars and adding more empirical and application of the newly enlarged marketing mix.

Furthermore, the majority of research undertaken in this field has focused on developed economies. Ethiopia, where the research is centered, is a developing country that, in contrast to the aforementioned economy, has placed a lower priority on scientific research. Most research works in the case area related to the hospitality industry, to the researcher's knowledge, have placed a greater emphasis on service quality and customer satisfaction than on the entire marketing mix activities (Orthodox, 2017; G/egziabher, 2015; Simachew and Hailemariam, 2018; Birhanu, 2017; Shimekit et al., 2016). As a result, investigating the above factors and their correlations in a developing country like Ethiopia adds to current theories and management practises.

As a result, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the extended marketing mix (7ps) on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the Ethiopian hospitality industry, specifically in some selected three-star hotels in the two major regional capital cities of Mekelle and Semera, both of which are located in northern Ethiopia.

2. Literature Review

Various previous research scholars and marketing professionals claimed that marketing mix has impact on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. By the same token there are undeniable number of empirical and theoretical ground mentioning the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Based on these theoretical and empirical claims the following

relationships have been proposed for further detailed statistical investigation. Accordingly below are detailed triangulations of previous research findings on each of the constructs and the claimed relationships.

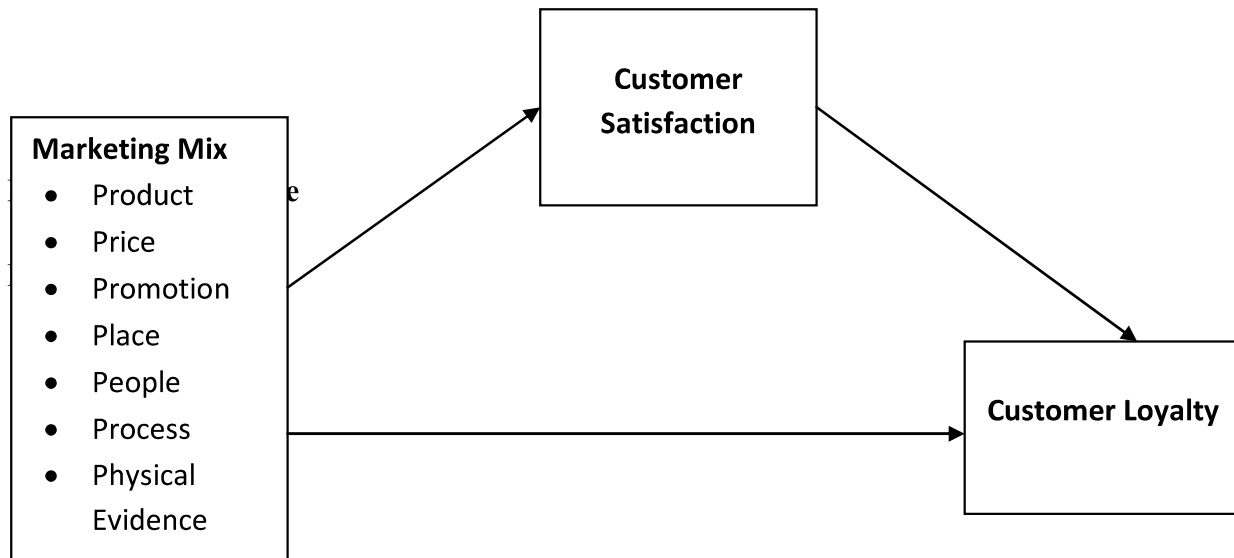


Figure-1 : Conceptual framework

The above illustrated conceptual framework can be supported by the following review of relevant literature on the relationship among the constructs of the proposed model.

2.1 Marketing Mix

According to McCarthy (1964), marketing mix is a combination of all the aspects that marketing managers put on their agenda to fulfill and meet the demands of the target market, and it contains four dimensions: product, price, place, and promotion. Kotler and Keller (2012), stated marketing mix as a technique used by a corporation to persuade customers to buy their product in order to generate money. Later, Booms and Bitner (1981) added three more aspects to the excellent mix equation: people, physical evidence, and process. As a result, the marketing mix factors in the current service marketing idea have been expanded to seven, namely, product, price, place promotion, people, process, and physical evidence.

Because of the unique nature of services, the standard marketing mix (4Ps) has been expanded into 7Ps, which include people, process, and physical evidence. As a result, the three additional marketing mix parts are mostly employed in service marketing and are cross-functional in nature. All of the factors in the marketing mix have the potential to improve consumer happiness. Researchers have stated their views on the link between marketing and consumer satisfaction (Zineldin&Philipson, 2007). And it was proven that the hotel's marketing satisfied the consumer, and that the marketing mix had a substantial impact on customer satisfaction. In a research of three and four-star hotel customers in Jayapura, Saling&BasriModding et al. (2016) reported

that the marketing mix had a substantial impact on customer satisfaction. Chonlada S. & Bahaudin G. M. (2014), on the other hand, revealed that there was no significant relationship between the level of customer's satisfaction and the marketing practices.

Therefore, this study focuses on the hospitality sector as one of the service industries, and it employs the seven-dimensional marketing mix provided by Booms and Bitner (1981).

H1: Marketing mix has statistically significant effect on Customer satisfaction

2.2. Customer satisfaction

Since Cardozo's (1965) foundational study of customer effort, expectations, and satisfaction, customer satisfaction has been a prominent issue in marketing practice and academic research. Despite several attempts to measure and explain consumer satisfaction, there appears to be no consensus on how to define it (Giese and Cote, 2000). In their book on marketing management, Kotler and Keller (2012) give a more extensive description of customer satisfaction, defining it as "a person's feeling." As a result of comparing the results to expectations, customer satisfaction may be characterised as a feeling of pleasure or disappointment. Customer satisfaction is also a corporate activity that focuses on creating value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and showing the capacity and responsibility to meet their needs.

Consumer satisfaction has been linked to service quality by some writers (Gerpott et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2004), but it has also been linked to customer perceptions of products and services by others (Anderson et al., 1994). Customers have their own set of expectations, and if the performance falls short of those expectations, the customer will be dissatisfied; on the other side, if the performance exceeds those expectations, the customer will be delighted.

There are at least two separate approaches to consumer satisfaction, one is transactional and the other is cumulative. Transaction-specific satisfaction provides particular diagnostic information about a single product or service experience (Lam et al. 2004). Cumulative customer satisfaction, on the other hand, is an overall assessment based on the total purchase and consumption experiences with a product or service over time (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann 1994), which is more fundamental and useful in predicting a consumer's subsequent behavior and a firm's past, present, and future performance than transaction – specific consumer satisfaction.

As a result, the second approach was used in this study, which stated that the definition of satisfaction should be based on total customer satisfaction rather than service quality. The total satisfaction strategy was used in this study, which was based on definition and empirical works by earlier researchers. For many years, customer satisfaction has been considered a significant antecedent of loyalty. In this regard, Fornell (1992) asserted that great customer pleasure is the primary reason of strong customer loyalty. Furthermore, Hong and Goo (2004) investigated whether customer satisfaction and loyalty are significantly and positively related, and found satisfaction is a precondition for loyalty in a variety of businesses. According to Samaan Al. (2015), customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty.

H2: Customer Satisfaction has significant statistical effect on customer loyalty

2.3. Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined as a deep-seated internal commitment to repurchase or re-patronize a chosen product or service in the future, despite environmental circumstances that may promote switching behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Customer loyalty is vital in business since it allows a firm to keep consumers while enhancing its financial performance and ensuring its survival. It is the primary motive for a business to keep its clients. Customers should feel more than happy, and simply satisfying them may not be enough; it must result in loyalty. As a result, customer loyalty is seen as a significant goal of many selling tactics, as well as an underlying strategic marketing goal (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978).

Based on Kotler and Keller's (2012) idea, researchers employ a variety of metrics to evaluate consumer loyalty. Repeat purchases, frequency of purchases, and consumer brand preference may all be used to determine this. However, the most often used loyalty measuring instruments contain two dimensions: repurchase intention and attitudinal propensity (Pritchard et al, 1999). Furthermore, measuring customer loyalty using the behavior dimension typically necessitates the right mix of both attitudinal and behavioral traits (Soo K Kang, 2015).

In this study, customer loyalty was measured using two categories of attitudinal and behavioral traits. Behavioral loyalty relates to repurchase and observed results such as favorable remarks and referring to others such as friends or family, and it demonstrates the qualities of consumer loyalty in behavioral terms. Attitudinal loyalty is the customer's sense of belonging or dedication to a brand, product, or service. According to Day (1969), the idea of loyalty has both behavioral and attitudinal components, which are approached in tandem. The marketing mix has a positive and significant direct effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, according to Achmad M. and Sugeng P. (2018), who conducted a study on budget hotel customers in DKI Jakarta province and discovered that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant direct effect on customer loyalty.

H3: Marketing mix has statistically significant effect on customer loyalty

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Respondents Background

The target Population of the study are all hotel customers be it foreign or domestic who have spent a night in the selected hotels during the time of the data collection. As recommended by many writers, Cochran W.G.(1977) formula is usually used for unlimited target population and the same was applied to determine the sample size. In this regard, about 400 customers were approached for data collection purpose and data was solicited using structured questionnaire. Of these participants, few observations were dropped from further analysis during data cleaning stage and finally 387 sample units were used. Of these 387 participants, 269 (69.5%) male and 118(30.5%) are female participants. Age wise 15.2% (18-25 years), 35.4% (26-35), 28.2% (36-45), 21.2% of the respondents are above 45 years old. Marriage composition of the participants is 60.7% married, 33.9% and 5.4% are single and divorced respectively. Educational profile of the

customer indicates that about 45.7% are masters and above, 33.3% bachelor, 15.0% diploma, 5.4% secondary school complete and the rest .5% are at elementary class level. In terms of occupation composition about 38.8% are government employees, 33.3% are business persons, 15.0% are private employees, 7.5% are tourists, 3.1% are students and the rest (others) accounts to 3%. Overall, the personal background of the participants evidences that individuals of diverse background participated in the study.

3.2. Data and data analysis methods

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire as the study mainly employed quantitative data for further analysis. The collected data was encoded and decoded using SPSS version 23 followed by data screening for missing and outliers. In this regard, missing values and outliers were checked using Microsoft excel 2010 and mahalonobes distance respectively(Hair et al,2014). Overall, measurement scale evaluation was undertaken using EFA and CFA. Using the cleaned data, Amos version 23 software for structural equation model (SEM) specifically; confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to test for measurement and structural model fits and hypothesis testing.(Byrne, 2010)

4. Measurement and Structural Model Evaluation

Under this section, measurement scales adopted from previous validated research works are thoroughly and statistically reexamined in terms of convergent and discriminant validity and measurement model evaluation. In addition, the relationships between the proposed structural relationships and collected sample data are also statistically evaluated.

Table-1: Convergent validity and reliability test

Variable	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
PP	0.886	0.609	.884
PR	0.897	0.636	.894
CL	0.864	0.561	.861
PM	0.836	0.505	.835
CS	0.892	0.674	.890
PE	0.833	0.625	.828
PD	0.786	0.555	.785
PL	0.882	0.667	.859
PS	0.747	0.500	.738

As can be seen from table-1, convergent validity is well established as CR is greater than 0.7 and AVE is also above the set threshold $i.e \geq 0.5$ (Hair et al, 2014). And at the same time the internal consistency of the measurement items are also okay with reference to 0.7 Cronbach's Alpha value recommended by (Ibid). Overall the convergent validity and internal consistency is well established.

Table-2: Discriminant validity

PD	PP	PR	PM	CL	CS	PL	PE	PS
0.745								
0.698	0.780							
0.646	0.677	0.798						
0.701	0.653	0.667	0.711					
0.135	0.147	0.134	0.208	0.749				
0.038	-0.009	0.038	0.048	0.146	0.821			
0.117	0.149	0.130	0.162	0.195	0.017	0.817		
0.170	0.228	0.233	0.198	0.106	0.075	0.487	0.791	
0.037	0.118	0.100	0.156	0.076	0.055	0.129	0.155	0.707

Discriminant validity is claimed to be well established when the square root of AVE exceeds correlation of a variable and the other construct (Fornell and Larcker,1981).Therefore,with reference to the above definition and statistical data portrayed in table-2, the discriminant validity of the measurement scale is okay.

Measurement model fit tests were also made using various triangulated statistical methods recommended by Byrne, 2010.

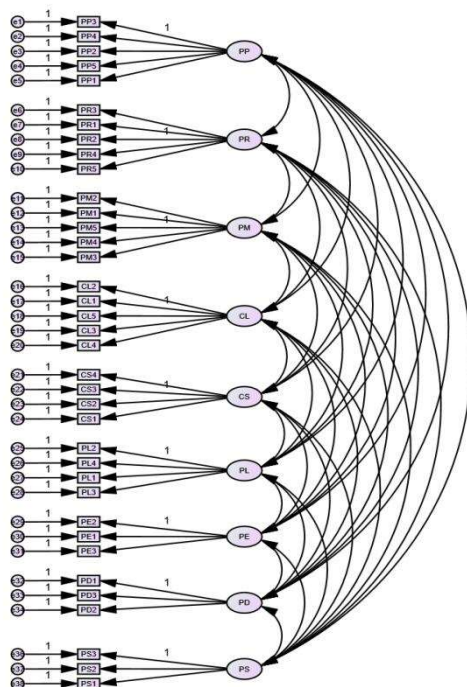


Figure-2: Final measurement model

To test the fitness of measurement model, statistical methods like CMIN/DF,GFI,TLI,CFI, and RMSEA were used as prescribed by Byrne, 2010. Accordingly, the summary of the above statistical results are mentioned in the following table.

Table-3: Measurement Model Fit Indices

Category of the index	Name of the index	Threshold/cut point	Output	Interpretation
Parsimonious fit	Chi sq./df	<3	1.635	Excellent
Absolute fit	GFI	Shall be close to .95	.883	Excellent
	RMSEA	<.05	.40	Excellent
Incremental fit	CFI	Shall be close to .95	.960	Excellent
	TLI	Shall be close to .95	.955	Excellent

Hence, the above statistical outputs evidences that the measurement model is fit. Besides with reference to Gaskin and Lim (2016), all the measurement indices can be interpreted as excellent.Statistical examinations were also made to check if the data fits the proposed structural relationships. Figure-2 indicates the established relationships among the constructs.

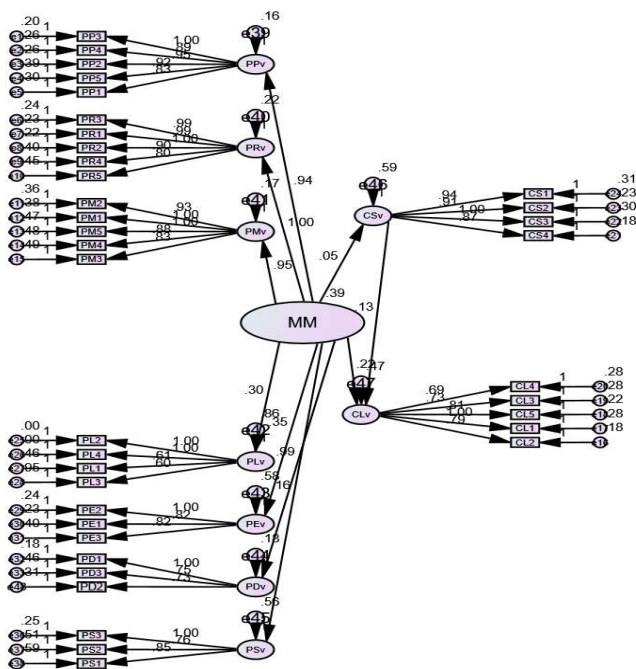


Figure 3 : Structural relationships model

Statistical thresholds recommended by Byrne(2010) and interpretation guideline by Gaskin and Lim(2016) were used to evaluate structural model fit. As can be observed from table-4, all statistical outputs evidence the claimed relationships and the data fits well.

Table-4: Structural model fit indices

Category of the index	Name of the index	Threshold/cut of point	Output	Interpretation
Parsimonious fit	Chi sq./df	<3	1.729	Excellent
Absolute fit	GFI	Shall be close to .95	.873	Excellent
	RMSEA	<.05	0.43	Excellent
Incremental fit	CFI	Shall be close to .95	.951	Excellent
	TLI	Shall be close to .95	.947	Excellent

5. Results and Discussions

The ongoing theoretical debate on the marketing mix mainly involves in the use of the traditional 4Ps or use of 7Ps on service marketing. As such some argue that the traditional 4Ps are sufficient to examine service marketing as the manufacturing products do. But some scholars like Booms and Bitner(1981) who originally stated the importance of adding the 3Ps to the service, taking the unique nature of service products such as perishability and it's at a time production and consumption, strongly argue for the application of the 7Ps. Thus, both the theoretical and empirical debates are unfinished which needs more research on the area particularly the hospitality industry compared to other services industries such tel-com., banking and transports etc. Hence, with this in mind the study proposed marketing mix (7Ps) to have positive and significant effect on both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Accordingly, structural equation model was applied and the confirmatory factor analysis results are shown in table-4

Table-5: Hypothesis Results

Path	Hypothesis	Estimate (β Value)	P-Value	Decision
CS <--- MM	H1	.046	.521	Reject
CL <--- CS	H2	.127	.015	Accept
CL<---MM	H3	.217	.001	Accept

In general, statistical data shown in table-5 Indicates that marketing mix got significant positive impact on customer loyalty ($\beta=.217$ at P-value=.001). Besides, customer satisfaction also proved to have a positive and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty ($\beta=.127$ at P-

value=.015). However, marketing mix failed to directly explain customer satisfaction at β value of .046 and P-value=.521.

As clearly put under the study, the proposed model claimed the direct effects of marketing mix on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Based on these relationships, hypotheses were developed and tested using structural equation model in general and confirmatory factor analysis in particular. Accordingly, the result of statistical analysis showed that marketing mix got significant effect on customer loyalty but failed to explain customer satisfaction. Besides, customer satisfaction has a positive and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty. In this regard, writers like Achmad M. & Sugeng P. (2018) also supports finding related to the claimed relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty. In addition many scholars including Hong & Goo (2004) and Samaan Al. (2015) also echoed the direct and positive effects of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Chonlada S. & Bahaudin G. M. (2014) found insignificant statistical relationship between marketing mix and customer satisfaction. Gitau, P. M. I, Erick, K. M. and Aden I. N. (2013) also revealed marketing mix has no significant relation with customer satisfaction.

6. Managerial Implications

The result of the study gives a clue to hospitality marketing managers to be aware of intensive engagement on the full application of the 7ps package of marketing mix so as to retain existing customers to ensure customers loyal as loyalty is receiving an apex attention in modern service marketing practices. This days marketers shouldn't only give attention to satisfying customers as the contemporary service business has become more competitive and the swift changing customer's need are urging hotel practitioners to work many more on loyalty to ensure the existence and profitability of their business. By the token, this study also supported that hospitality marketing managers need to ensure customer satisfaction as it is a base to bring about loyal customer. Overall, the study has laid foundation to marketers and policy makers that better professional work on marketing mix and customer satisfaction are means to ensure long term customer oriented relationship thereby strength loyalty.

In general, the hospitality marketers, hotel customers and marketing scholars will benefit greatly from this study. The results of this study could make a significant contribution to the development of comprehensive marketing strategy, the measurement of customer loyalty

7. Conclusion

The study was aimed to determine the relationship between the marketing mix with 7ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process and Physical Evidence), customer satisfaction and Loyalty in some selected 3-star hotels in Ethiopia. Based on these relationships, hypotheses were developed and tested using structural equation model in general and confirmatory factor analysis in particular. Accordingly, the result of statistical analysis showed that marketing mix got significant effect on customer loyalty but failed to explain customer satisfaction. Besides,

customer satisfaction has a positive and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty. This would contribute to the body of knowledge on marketing mix of 7ps, customer satisfaction, and loyalty and provides theoretical and applied suggestions for the hospitality industry.

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