



The Effect of Marketing Mix Components on the Image of a Private School and Parental Loyalty in Battambang Province, Cambodia

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Abstract

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational marketing practices by examining the impact of marketing mix components on the image of a private school and parental loyalty in Battambang Province, Cambodia. The research objective was to investigate the effects of the 7Ps marketing mix components (product, place, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, parent-teacher communication) on school image and parental loyalty. A survey was administered to a sample of 351 parents to understand their perceptions of the school's image and how this affected their loyalty to it. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and simple/multiple regression. A positive correlation was found between all marketing mix factors and the school's image. Furthermore, school image was found to mediate the relationship between the marketing mix components and parental loyalty, indicating that image plays a crucial role in translating marketing efforts into parental loyalty. The study also found a direct link between the overall marketing mix and parental loyalty. These findings suggest that the school has been successful in leveraging its marketing mix to create a favorable image and foster parental loyalty. However, the study's cross-sectional design and data collection from a single site limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research studies could explore additional factors influencing parental loyalty or collect data from multiple schools to examine the extent to which these findings may apply in other settings.

Keywords: Marketing Mix, School Image, Parental Loyalty, Cambodia School, Educational Marketing

Introduction

The role of corporate image in the growth and profitability of organizations is important (Kim, Yin & Lee, 2020). This is true even for educational institutions, where public perception can significantly influence

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their reputation and success (Serafimova, 2021; Chidananda, 2021). However, the impact of school image on parental loyalty to educational institutions remains underexplored, creating a gap in the literature that this study aimed to address. The educational marketing mix, often referred to as the 7 Ps - product, place, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, and parent-teacher communication, is a critical factor in shaping an institution's image (Eger, Egerová, & Pisonová, 2018; Ivy, 2008). In the case of schools, marketing extends beyond mere promotion. It involves a complex interplay of social and managerial aspects, striving to meet human needs through the creation and offering of educational products (Fisk et al., 2020).

This study focused on a private primary and high school located in Battambang Province, Cambodia that engaged in minimal overt marketing activities. This school, accredited by the Ministry of Education since 2011, offers a robust educational program in the Khmer language. Despite its high enrollment numbers, the school faces significant challenges. The ongoing post-pandemic economic downturn has limited the school's ability to expand its educational offerings or increase fees due to parental financial constraints; this is because many parents have lost their jobs or experienced salary cuts. Thus, there is a need to understand how marketing mix elements influence parents' perceptions of the school's image and their loyalty to it. Loyalty, in this context, refers to the likelihood of parents continuing to enroll their children in the school and recommending it to others (Todea, Davidescu, Pop, & Stamule, 2022).

To address these challenges, an in-depth investigation using the 7Ps framework was conducted at this school. The aim was to understand parents' perceptions of the school and how these perceptions influence their loyalty. The conceptual framework was based on a study by Malik, Mushtaq, Jaswal and Malik (2015). The aim of this study was to provide practical insights for school administrators that may aid in improving and refining their marketing strategies. Its findings may also be helpful to those who are interested in the intersection of the domains of marketing and education.

Literature Review

The evolution and Significance of the Marketing Mix in Education

The marketing mix concept, originally characterized by the well-known 4Ps-Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, was first proposed by James Culliton in the late 1940s and later popularized by E. Jerome McCarthy (Langat, 2016; Kotler & Armstrong, 2019). This model served as the foundation for marketing strategies across various industries. However, the shift towards a service-oriented economy necessitated a more comprehensive framework. The modern marketing mix, expanded by Booms and Bitner, encompasses seven components, integrating the original 4Ps with three additional components: Physical Evidence, People, and Process (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). In an educational context, Process is replaced by Parent-Teacher Communication (Casap, 2018). This has reshaped the landscape of educational institutions, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. These institutions, once primarily



focused on imparting knowledge, are now adopting a more holistic approach akin to service-oriented industries. Ivy (2008) introduced the seven elements model of the marketing mix for the educational sector as Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Parent-Teacher Communication. The integration of marketing mix strategies into education began in the 1980s and 1990s (Pramiarsih, Yunaningsih, & Syarkani, 2022) as schools faced increased competition driven by marketing forces and declining birth rates (Schultz, Patti & Kitchen, 2014). Modern educational markets have become increasingly competitive as private schools vie with public institutions vie to attract a dwindling number of students.

This encourages the use of marketing mix components as a strategic tool, especially by private schools that aim for excellence (Asiah, Soe'loed, & Sjamsir, 2022). The 7Ps educational service marketing approach may serve as a roadmap, helping schools to create compelling value propositions that are aligned with their objectives for potential clients (Chamberlin-Kim, Tarnay, & Wells, 2019; Kristensen & Remmen, 2019). Customer-oriented marketing approaches focus on student and stakeholder needs and expectations (Guilbault, 2016). In addition, marketing plays a crucial role in designing educational systems to meet societal needs that position institutions as sustainable providers of societal benefits (Gorghiu, Petrescu, & Enache, 2019).

The Influence and Importance of School Image

The marketing mix components, along with the overall educational experience, are crucial in shaping and maintaining a school's image in competitive educational markets (Ndofirepi, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020). The concept of brand image, as defined by Kalra (2016), is a powerful force that shapes perceptions through the lens of consumers' memories. This force is particularly strong in education. Tecoału (2022) asserted that for educational institutions, reputation and current image often outweigh actual educational quality in the decision-making process of prospective students and parents.

Transitioning from this broad perspective to a more specific one, school image serves as a social identifier. It fosters a sense of connection between teachers, students, and the institution itself (Kalkan, Altınay, Altınay, Atasoy, & Dağlı, 2020). Interestingly, this connection is not static, but rather, evolves based on individual experiences. As noted by Vladimirovna and Sergeevna (2021), a single school may project multiple images, reflecting the diversity in the needs, experiences, and values of its stakeholders.

Building on this understanding, the need for active management of educational image has been stressed by Shevchenko and Tsema (2021). Like corporations, schools must actively market themselves to attract students and parents (Scapp, 2016). However, this marketing is not solely about promoting a school's program offerings. It also involves shaping public opinion and community impressions, which collectively form a school's image (Tran, Nguyen, Melewar, & Bodoh, 2015). Adding another layer to this, Liu and Cheng (2018) found that the indirect impact of school image was more influential than the direct effects on student retention.



In response to these challenges, strategic marketing has become essential for schools to navigate survival and growth challenges amidst the establishment of new competitors (Ho, 2014). The marketing mix is a key factor that influences competitive positioning (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021) and the development of tailored models for educational institutions. Research by Abadi and Hidayatulloh (2022) indicated that schools which lack knowledge of marketing mix strategies face significant challenges, hindering their own growth potential. Creating a school's image involves diverse elements, including marketing initiatives, information dissemination, and customer experiences (Li & Hung, 2009). Thus, schools must adopt marketing strategies that create and sustain an attractive image and will foster consumer loyalty amidst growing competition (Windiar & Djumarno, 2021).

The Relationship between School Image and Parental Loyalty

A positive image has been correlated with increased trust among customers (Ahn & Rho, 2016), leading to repeat purchases, recommendations, and higher tolerance for service issues. In education, a positive image has been found to foster a sense of belonging, which is crucial for generating customer loyalty (Brashear-Alejandro, Kang, & Groza, 2016). Students perceiving a positive image report stronger institutional belonging, leading to increased familial loyalty and engagement post-graduation.

Previous studies have found that several factors contribute to parental loyalty; these include engagement, collaboration, parental involvement, academic quality, satisfaction, and perceived image (Ali & Ahmed, 2018; Todea et al., 2022). Moreover, communication and academic support have also been found to play a significant role in enhancing parental commitment to education (Al-Hassan, 2020; Nguyen, Pham, Cao, Nguyen, & Do, 2021). This loyalty strengthens parent-school partnerships, aids students' academic and social development, and—when sustained over time—will enhance a school's reputation (Thomas, 2015).

Interestingly, the marketing mix may also play a role in shaping parental loyalty. In a study conducted in Indonesia, Hambali and Syah (2019) found that the marketing mix influenced parent loyalty through the school image. This finding highlighted the mediating role of school image in the relationship between marketing mix and parental loyalty.

Research Subject: The Private School in Battambang, Cambodia

Based on the school registrar's report in January 2024 the private school which was studied had 72 faculty and 10 staff members who served a student population of 1,028 students. Despite minimal marketing efforts, the school has successfully provided Khmer curriculum education to lower-income families since its inauguration. In addition, the school also provided job opportunities to help retired public school teachers. The school owner utilized his personal funds to construct this school, and it operates independently, without any assistance from the government or external donations. Its graduates typically pursue higher education in Battambang City or attend universities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital city,

while others choose to further their studies in countries such as Thailand, Australia, Canada, France, Switzerland, and the United States.

Research Hypotheses

The following alternative hypotheses were used in this research study.

H_1 : The 7Ps marketing mix factors (Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, Parent-Teacher Communication) positively impact the school image of a private school located in Battambang Province, Cambodia.

H_2 : The school image of this private school has a positive impact on parental loyalty.

H_3 : The 7Ps marketing mix factors (product, place, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, parent-teacher communication) have a positive impact on parental loyalty to this school.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was based on previous studies by Li and Hung (2009), along with Malik et al. (2015), with certain modifications. This study investigated parental perceptions of all seven elements of the educational marketing mix, and how they influenced their perception of school image. Additionally, it examined both the direct influence of the 7Ps on parental loyalty toward the school and their indirect effects on parental loyalty through the mediating variable of school image (see Figure 1).

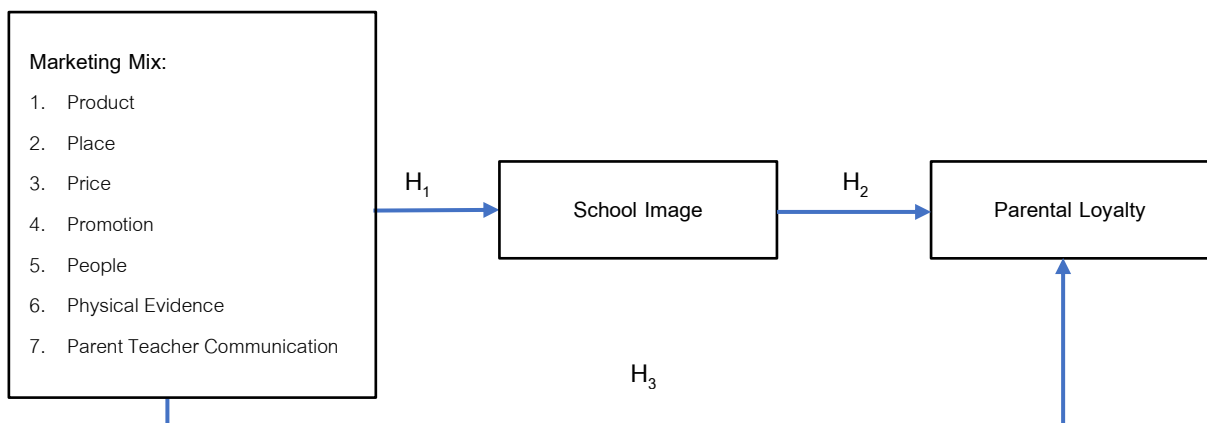


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Population and Sampling Frame

The parental population of the school as of January 2024 was about 1,850. However, only one parent or guardian per family was invited to participate in the study to prevent overlapping responses. Thus,



the estimated study population was 925. The sample size was based on Veal's (2005) method for obtaining a confidence level of 95 percent for a population of this size, which indicated that the sample size should be not less than 278 parents. However, the school administration recommended that surveys be sent to the parents of middle and high school students because they were older, better able to understand directions, and more capable of cooperating with the data collection process. So parents of these two sub-groups (Estimated to be 500) formed the population for this study. In spite of this reduction in population size, the originally calculated sample size was retained.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire consisting of 5-point Likert scale items was developed by the researcher based on concepts and survey questions used in previous research studies. It consisted of eight demographic and 57 Likert-scale questions to measure the 7Ps marketing mix components (Independent Variables) from studies by Li and Hung (2009) and Malik et al. (2015); some questions were modified to fix the local context. Seven questions were used to measure the perception of school image (the Mediating Variable) from studies by Martinez and Pina (2005) and Pina, Martinez, de Chernatony, and Drury (2006), and five questions to measure parental loyalty (Dependent Variable) from Helgesen and Nasset (2007) and Nguyen and Leblanc (2001). The items in most of these studies had been previously validated. The combined questionnaire was comprised of ten sections and was translated into the Khmer language.

The Likert scale employed in this study was a 5-point scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Agree; and with 1 = Very Dissatisfied, and 5 = Very Satisfied. Since the scale ranged from 1 to 5 and was divided into 5 classes, the calculated class interval was 0.80. This interval was used to establish cut-off points and corresponding interpretations for different scoring levels for the marketing mix variables, school image, and parental loyalty as shown below.

An average score for an item of 4.21–5.00 = a Very High Level of agreement or satisfaction

An average score of 3.41–4.20 = a High Level

An average score of 2.61–3.40 = an Average Level

An average score of 1.81–2.60 = a Low Level

An average score of 1.00–1.80 = a Very Low Level of agreement or satisfaction

Content validity was pursued by obtaining feedback in the form of Item-Objective Congruence scores from three experienced researchers, and adjustments in item questions were made based on their suggestions. Cronbach's alpha was employed to measure internal consistency, with all variables exceeding the threshold of 0.70, indicating suitability for the study (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012); the results are shown below in Table 1.



Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Values for Items Measuring Study Variables

| Variable | Number of Questions | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Product | 10 | 0.894 |
| Place | 5 | 0.797 |
| Price | 4 | 0.704 |
| Promotion | 8 | 0.801 |
| People Mix | 10 | 0.927 |
| Physical Evidence | 10 | 0.892 |
| Parent-Teacher Communication | 4 | 0.829 |
| School Image | 7 | 0.929 |
| Parental Loyalty | 5 | 0.738 |

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed to middle and high school students at a private school located in Battambang Province, Cambodia; they were instructed to deliver it to their parents and bring it back to school the following morning. The study's objectives and relevance were explained in a letter attached to the questionnaire. The researcher distributed 500 questionnaires to students and received 370 responses from parents the following day. However, 19 of them were not usable because of missing information; thus, there were 351 usable questionnaires/responses for this study. Given the method of data collection that was used, it is possible that non-response bias may have influenced the data set.

Statistical Analysis

Survey responses were collected, organized, and analyzed using a statistical software package. The responses were categorized based on factors such as the respondent's relationship to the student, student gender, parental level of education, occupation, distance from home to school, number of enrolled children in the school, child's study duration, and how parents learned about the school. Descriptive analysis was performed on the data, and statistical measures like means and standard deviations were calculated. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the level of association between the marketing mix variables, school image, and parental loyalty. Finally, both simple and multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationships among the variables.



Results

Descriptive Analysis

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are shown in Table 2, which provides an initial profile of the study participants. The sample consisted of 351 parents of middle and high school children who were studying at the school. As Table 2 indicates, a significant percentage of the individuals surveyed identified as guardians (45.0%), some of whom were grandparents or relatives who lived near the school.

Table 2 Respondents' demographic information

| Demographic | | Frequency (n=351) | Percentage (pct=100) |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Relationship with the student | Father | 69 | 19.70 |
| | Mother | 124 | 35.30 |
| | Guardian | 158 | 45.00 |
| Relationship to and gender of children | Son | 93 | 26.50 |
| | Daughter | 220 | 62.70 |
| | Both | 38 | 38.00 |
| Parent's education | Below high school | 53 | 15.10 |
| | High school diploma | 218 | 62.10 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 43 | 12.30 |
| | Master's degree | 29 | 8.30 |
| | Other | 8 | 2.30 |
| Parent's job | Government employee | 33 | 9.40 |
| | Private employee | 39 | 11.10 |
| | Businessman | 88 | 25.10 |
| | Retired | 10 | 2.80 |
| | Unemployed | 98 | 27.90 |
| | Other | 82 | 23.40 |
| Number of children studying in this school | One | 223 | 63.50 |
| | Two | 90 | 25.60 |



| Demographic | | Frequency (n=351) | Percentage (pct=100) |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| | Three | 25 | 7.10 |
| | More than three | 11 | 3.80 |
| Know about the school from | Family/relatives | 140 | 39.90 |
| | Friends | 60 | 17.10 |
| | Colleagues | 27 | 7.70 |
| | Social media | 46 | 13.10 |
| | Other | 78 | 24.90 |
| Distance from school | Less than one kilometer | 185 | 53.00 |
| | One to five kilometers | 115 | 33.10 |
| | More than five kilometers | 49 | 14.20 |
| Years child has been studying in this school | Less than four years | 172 | 49.00 |
| | Four to six years | 88 | 25.10 |
| | Seven to nine years | 44 | 12.50 |
| | More than nine years | 47 | 13.40 |

The majority of participants had enrolled their daughters in school (62.7%) and had completed high school themselves (62.1%). Among this group, there were businessmen and unemployed individuals (25.1% and 27.9%, respectively), and the majority had one child currently studying at the school (63.5%). Additionally, nearly 40% of the participants had learned about the school from family members or relatives. The majority of participants lived within a kilometer of the school (53.0%), and a significant percentage had enrolled their children in the school for less than four years (49%).

An analysis was conducted of parental perceptions of 7Ps marketing mix variables, consisting of the school's product, place, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, parent-teacher communication, school image, and parent loyalty levels. The mean scores and standard deviation values for the school are shown below in Table 3.



Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Distinctive Competencies (N=351)

| Variable | Mean | SD | Level |
|------------------------------|------|-----|---------|
| Product | 3.51 | .62 | High |
| Place | 3.67 | .72 | High |
| Price | 3.81 | .58 | High |
| Promotion | 3.28 | .67 | Average |
| People Mix | 3.76 | .62 | High |
| Physical Evidence | 3.54 | .62 | High |
| Parent-Teacher Communication | 3.57 | .68 | High |
| School Image | 3.65 | .68 | High |
| Parental Loyalty | 3.52 | .77 | High |

The results showed that parental perception of the 7 Ps marketing mix elements and school image was mostly at the “High” level (3.41 to 4.20 on a 5-point scale) for six out of seven components. These included Product, Place, Price, People, Physical Evidence, and Parent-Teacher Communication. Although none of the scores were very high, they were still considered to be at a good level. However, the Promotion marketing mix component had the lowest score (mean score of 3.28) and was perceived as an “Average” level. Furthermore, the overall School Image was perceived as high (mean score of 3.65), and the overall Parental Loyalty of the school was also perceived as high (mean score of 3.53).

Regression Analysis

The correlation matrix (Table 4) showed that all variables were associated with each other. However, the relationships between place and promotion; place and people; place and parent-teacher communication; and price and parent-teacher communication were not as strong as the other correlations. The Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were between 0.357 to 0.638, statistically significant at the 0.01 level; however, it was possible that multicollinearity may have occurred. Therefore, the researcher conducted further tests of multicollinearity using VIF values. The test results showed VIF values ranging from 1.500 – 2.435, which were less than 10. This indicated that there was no relationship among the variables or no multicollinearity. In addition, the KMO and Bartlett test was performed to evaluate all available data together. The results showed a KMO value of 0.939 and a significance level for Bartlett’s test of less than 0.01. Variable collinearity indicates how strongly a single variable is correlated with other variables. Kaiser (1974) suggested that $KMO > 0.9$ was very good; hence, all independent variables could be used for multiple regression analysis and to predict the school image and parental loyalty to the private school located in Battambang Province, Cambodia.



Table 4 Pearson Correlation Matrix for Marketing Mix Variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Product | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| 2. Place | .502** | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 3. Price | .468** | .467** | 1.00 | | | | |
| 4. Promotion | .653** | .357** | .419** | 1.00 | | | |
| 5. People | .562** | .395** | .425** | .520** | 1.00 | | |
| 6. Physical evidence | .605** | .412** | .449** | .594** | .658** | 1.00 | |
| 7. Parent-teacher communication | .524** | .382** | .385** | .522** | .606** | .638** | 1.000 |
| VIF | 2.311 | 1.502 | 1.500 | 2.026 | 2.099 | 2.435 | 1.967 |

Note: ** $p < .01$

Regression analysis was also utilized to investigate the correlation between the Marketing Mix variables and the School's Image. The results of the Simple Regression Analysis (Table 5) indicated that each individual factor of the Marketing Mix (Models 1-7) had a statistically significant relationship with the School's Image, at a significance level of 0.01. However, the results from the multiple regression analysis (Model 9) revealed that 3 out of the 7 Ps—product, physical evidence, and parent-teacher communication—had a statistically significant relationship with the school's image at the 0.01 level. Moreover, promotion had a statistically significant relationship with the school's image at the 0.05 level. However, the remaining 3 Marketing Mix elements did not have a statistically significant relationship with the school's image. Furthermore, physical evidence had the highest impact on the school's image ($B = 0.505$).

Additionally, the Simple Regression Analysis (Model 8) revealed a statistically significant relationship between the overall Marketing Mix (average of product, promotion, physical evidence, and parent-teacher communication) and the School's Image, with a significance level of 0.01. Hence, it can be concluded that only four out of seven marketing mix factors were positively correlated with the school's image, as well as that the overall marketing mix was positively correlated with the school's image. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Table 5: Simple and Multiple Regression Results for the 7P Marketing Mix Variables and School Image

| Variables | DV: School Image | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 | Model 8 | Model 9 |
| Product | .679** | | | | | | | | .173** |
| Place | | .413** | | | | | | | .057 |



| Variables | DV: School Image | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 | Model 8 | Model 9 |
| Price | | | .523** | | | | | | .060 |
| Promotion | | | | .601** | | | | | .116* |
| People | | | | | .603** | | | | -.026 |
| Physical evidence | | | | | | .814** | | | .505** |
| P-T Communication | | | | | | | .595** | | .135** |
| Overall Marketing Mix | | | | | | | | 1.048** | |
| Constant B | 1.270** | 2.141** | 1.664** | 1.684** | 1.392** | .775** | 1.533** | -.108 | .064 |
| R | .625 | .437 | .451 | .593 | .556 | .744 | .601 | .755 | .792 |
| R Square | .390 | .191 | .203 | .352 | .309 | .554 | .361 | .571 | .628 |
| F | 233.200** | 82.467** | 89.151** | 189.646** | 156.295** | 432.720** | 197.539** | 463.752** | 82.737** |

Note: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The Simple Regression Analysis (Table 6) investigated relationships between the Marketing Mix, School Image, and Parental Loyalty. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between the overall Marketing Mix (Model 10), School Image (Model 11), and Parental Loyalty, with a statistical significance level of 0.01. Furthermore, the Multiple Regression Analysis (Model 12) demonstrated a significant relationship between four components of the Marketing Mix, the School Image, and Parental Loyalty to the school.

In other words, the positive impact of the school's image on parental loyalty supported Hypothesis 2, which suggested an indirect relationship between the overall marketing mix factors and parental loyalty. Additionally, Hypothesis 3, which proposed a direct relationship between the overall marketing mix factors (including product, place, price, promotion, people, physical evidence, and parent-teacher communication) and parental loyalty to the school, was also supported.

Table 6 Regression Results for Parents' Loyalty

| Variables | DV: Parent Loyalty | | |
|---------------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| | Model 10 | Model 11 | Model 12 |
| Marketing Mix | 1.129** | | .618** |
| School Image | | .825** | .488** |
| Constant B | -.536** | .507** | -.483** |
| R | .718 | .727 | .771 |



| Variables | DV: Parent Loyalty | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Model 10 | Model 11 | Model 12 |
| R Square | .516 | .529 | .595 |
| F | 99.651** | 391.824** | 255.763** |

Note: ** $p < .01$

Discussion and Conclusion

Hypothesis One

This study examined the relationship between the Marketing Mix's components (7Ps) and the School Image of a private school located in Battambang Province, Cambodia. Hypothesis 1 predicted significant relationships between these factors, which the analysis partially confirmed. Four out of seven Ps showed notable and statistically significant relationships with the school's image. The Product component highlighted the school's rigorous Khmer curriculum and faculty dedication to Cambodian culture, contributing to the competitive advantage of its curriculum. Despite scoring lowest, Promotion maintained significance through a robust parent and alumni network. The quality of the teachers and an effective Parent-Teacher Communication system had a significant positive impact on the school's image. Physical Evidence, despite lacking certain facilities, provided a convenient nearby site where students could safely learn. These findings align with previous research studies where positive correlations between marketing mix components and school image occurred, particularly in aspects like product, promotion, physical evidence, and parent-teacher communication (Alipour, Aghamohammadi, Ahmadi, & Hoseini, 2012; Johnny & Damrong Sattayawaksakul, 2023; Li & Hung, 2009). For the other three Ps that did not show statistically significant relationships with the school's image, it might be that while the parents in this study returned scores for these three marketing mix components (from Table 3: Place = 3.67; Price = 3.81; People Mix = 3.76), these variables were not directly related to their views of the school's overall image.

Hypothesis Two

The study's second hypothesis proposed an indirect relationship between the marketing mix elements and parental loyalty through the mediating variable of school image, and findings from the study provided substantial support for this proposition. The marketing mix, encompassing the 7Ps, significantly shaped the school's image, influencing parental perceptions. Factors such as product quality, location convenience, pricing, promotional effectiveness, staff competence, physical evidence adequacy, and parent-teacher communication contributed to the formation of the school's image. A positive school image also fosters parental loyalty, leading to continuing enrollment, attendance by younger siblings, positive referrals to potential students, and long-term relationships.



Regression analysis confirmed significant relationships between individual marketing mix factors and the school's image, as well as a significant correlation between the overall marketing mix and school image. This underscored the importance of a comprehensive marketing strategy. Moreover, the study highlighted the mediating role of school image in establishing the relationship between marketing tactics and parent loyalty, aligning with previous research findings (such as Hambali & Syah, 2019) on organizational image and customer loyalty. Additionally, empirical evidence supported hypotheses regarding a positive relationship between marketing strategies and student satisfaction, as well as student satisfaction and loyalty, mirroring findings in other loyalty research. These results emphasize the importance of effective marketing strategies in shaping parental perceptions and fostering loyalty to educational institutions (Azhar, Jufrizen, Prayogi & Sari, 2019; Chen, 2016; Malik et al., 2015).

Hypothesis Three

The study's third hypothesis proposed a direct relationship between the overall marketing mix factors (7Ps) and parental loyalty to the school. The marketing mix, crucial in determining a product or brand's offerings, consists of the traditional four P's (Price, Product, Promotion, and Place) with three additional P's (People, Physical Evidence, and Parent-Teacher Communication) in educational marketing. This direct relationship implies that better performance in these factors will enhance parents' loyalty, expressed through resistance to switching schools, favorable recommendations, premium price acceptance, and positive responses to marketing campaigns. Factors such as product quality, convenient location, reasonable pricing, effective promotion, competent staff, conducive facilities, and parent-teacher communication influence this loyalty. These findings reflect those of previous researchers such as Mermer, Özer and Şad (2022), suggesting that effective management of the marketing mix fosters parental loyalty, which is crucial for the school's success. These results diverge from some other studies, such as Ellitan (2023); Li and Hung (2009); Malik et al. (2015), possibly due to cultural differences and individual characteristics, with this study showing all components of the marketing mix significantly related to parental loyalty.

Conclusions

This study delves into how a private school in Battambang, Cambodia, utilized its marketing mix to cultivate its image and encourage parental loyalty. It found a positive correlation between four components of the marketing mix—product, promotion, physical facilities, and parent-teacher communication—and the school's image. While three components—place, price, and people—were not correlated with school image, nevertheless they had the highest average parental perception scores. These results indicate the school's effectiveness in creating a favorable impression. Furthermore, the study revealed a direct link between the overall marketing mix and parental loyalty. All of these key factors



significantly influenced the school's image and parental loyalty. This research emphasizes how important it is for educational institutions to guide their marketing mix to forge a positive image and cultivate parental loyalty. This involves not only delivering high-quality education, but also ensuring effective communication with parents, maintaining an optimal learning environment, and consistently refining their services in response to feedback and evolving needs.

Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Studies

The findings of this study underscore the importance of proactive image management strategies and effective communication in shaping perceptions and fostering loyalty. However, the study has several limitations. Its specific context at one particular school limits the generalizability of the findings. Potential biases in data collection methods and constraints in fully understanding school operations may have also impacted the results. Moreover, the exclusion of dropouts and students who left the school from the sample may have resulted in a more favorable view of the school's image and parental loyalty.

Future studies could explore additional factors influencing parental loyalty, conduct comparative studies across multiple schools, or delve into the role of digital marketing in shaping school image and parental loyalty. Additionally, future research could investigate the impact of the limitations identified in this study on the results, providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationships among the marketing mix, school image, and parental loyalty.

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