

## Effects Of The Marketing Mix On Customer Loyalty Towards The Korean Music Entertainment Industry

Received: June 29, 2021 / Received in revised form: November 29, 2021 / Accepted: January 14, 2022

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**T**he objective of this study is to analyze the main characteristics of the Korean music industry from the perspective of Thai fans. This objective was achieved by examining the components of the 7Ps marketing mix related to Korean music companies' strategies for turning Thai fans' loyalty into fandoms. This study applied quantitative research to collect data through an online survey questionnaire. Using purposive and snowball sampling methods, the study sample consisted of 441 Thai fans from across the country. The collected data were analyzed through data cleaning, descriptive analysis, assumption and reliability testing, and multiple linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The research findings identified the persona and prominent demographic characteristics of Thai fandoms. In addition, the study findings help comprehend the Korean music industry's critical characteristics under the 7Ps marketing mix, while the strategic evaluation provides useful insights into how this study's findings can be implemented to serve the target audiences and help grow business opportunities in Thailand by aligning with the target preferences, behaviors, and lifestyles.

**Keywords:** Marketing mix, Customer loyalty, Fandom, Korean music industry, marketing strategy, Music Industry

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This article is based on a master's thesis under the topic, "Effect of the 7Ps Marketing Mix on Customer Loyalty Towards the Korean Music Entertainment Industry" by Busareeya Natchakorn under the supervision of Manjiri Kunte.

## Introduction

The global awareness of K-pop culture and the huge impact it has on the international music industry has increased fourfold in the past decades (Roll, 2020). The Korean music industry trend has surged upwards and has attracted a global audience. In 2017, The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) revealed significant revenue growth in the South Korean music industry of up to 47% to USD 281.6 million (MusicAlly, 2019). The South Korean music market still showed rapid growth in 2018. There are three crucial factors affecting the global perception of the Korean music industry's K-pop phenomenon: global-local-global strategic positioning, the unique attributes of the artists and the K-pop music industry, and the transformation of technology including social media and online communities (Ahn, Oh, & Kim, 2013; Boman, 2019; Buchholz, 2020).

The study of Levison (1998) stated "The artistic values of music is presumably beauty – what Gurney labelled simply musical impressiveness". However, K-pop music goes beyond only the musical beauty. It transforms to reveal amalgamation of "flexibly associates itself with old and new, local and global while interweaving both retrospective and anticipatory vectors of cultural modalities" (Kim, 2016, p. 137-138). Corresponding to the study of Valge and Hinsberg (2020) implicated culture-specific pop music stated that K-pop's uniqueness combined the old styles of Korean music with the latest unique styles of American music. Korean music conveys historical and cultural aesthetics globally in the form of the folkloric details represented in melodies, choreography and the visual elements of music videos, including the

costumes. It integrates different cultural content that sets K-pop's music standard and differentiates it from the other genres and its traditional music previously. Moreover, each element of K-pop's visual and auditory package required high quality standard. (Low, 2020).

K-pop music has also had a substantial impact on Thailand. Howard and Lekakul (2018) said in their research that the Korean Wave influenced Thai youth with regard to music, clothing, food, and image. To understand Thai people's awareness of the K-pop trend and it's most attractive points. A result of the study, many respondents explained that the sound and rhythm are vital components to breaking down language barriers and make the audience perceive the substance of the song and feel it. Additionally, Thai teenagers follow K-pop costume and hairstyle fashions to express themselves and to gain confidence (Sangdaewa, 2020).

Regarding the direct impact of the K-pop music industry on Thailand, Thai fans have shown their support for K-pop concerts and special events in the country (Park, 2018a). Based on this review, it is apparent that KMI has an enormous effect on Thai fandom. However, no notable studies have analyzed the effects of marketing mix on Thai fandom and customer loyalty until now. Therefore, the current study attempts to explore the role of Marketing Mix of KMI on Thai fandom.

## Literature Review

Racoma (2019) stated that K-pop music strategies include different experiences of diversified unique and exciting methods, which can be summarized into three categories. First, K-pop embeds one language among the fans. This also

includes using language for their advantage to create a unique cultural ecosystem. The second factor is that the K-pop music industry consents to the freedom of content creators, allowing fans to create and upload fan-made content on several media and online channels. This facilitates and even encourages a two-way interaction within fan communities that serves to promote K-pop's popularity on social media. Third, other previous studies have suggested that the technology advancement aspect is an antecedent to K-pop's popularity. Utilizing digital marketing to apply suitable content through selected social media to approach the potential local markets has been a big contributor to this success (Park & Kim, 2020). Digital marketing strategy enables the distribution of products through various channels for the promotion and stimulation of purchasing and circulation (Tan, 2020). It can escalate audiences worldwide to become their fans and increase the cultural connections between original fandoms in local areas and in Korea to reinforce their love of their K-pop idols (Jang & Song, 2015).

Obiegbu, Larsen, Ellis and Reilly (2019) referred to customer loyalty in terms of fandom identity in their research on Co-constructing Loyalty in an Era of Digital Music Fandoms. The study of Obiegbu et al. (2019) also focused on understanding personal attitudes, motivations, decision-making processes, and the psychological and sociocultural context of the consumer that shapes their behavior by pointing out the consumer-brand relationship. Furthermore, they defined fandom as a reference of loyalty related to cultural products like films and music that are practical perspectives that give depth to understanding of the customer who is highly engaged and committed, who socializes with other

fans, and who has a unique identity, especially when they participate in online communities (Obiegbu et al., 2019).

The well thought-out-plan of the service marketing mix's tools combined with the development and examination of seven crucial elements—product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence—makes it work effectively and delivers a synchronized execution in the form of appropriated strategic business modernization, competitive advantage and business success (Langford, 2019). This creates customer satisfaction which then affects the customer's intention to recommend the service to prospective customers, which is a function of their perception of satisfaction based on product and service quality from their experiences and which instigates customer loyalty in terms of both behavioral and attitudinal aspects (Getty and Thompson, 1994; Yelkur, 2000). Othman et al.'s (2018) statement concurs with this perspective as they refer to how the accomplishment of product and service quality and other marketing elements resulting from implementing the 7Ps of the service marketing mix strategy enable the organizations to achieve their sales and profit objectives. Consequently, using marketing mix elements to popularize businesses and organizations can stimulate existing customers to keep patronizing their business and to become loyal customers (Othman et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown the relationships between the 7Ps marketing mix and fandoms' loyalty towards the Korean music industry.

**Product** - K-pop artists can be counted as the KMI's products. The artists represent those crafted personas who achieve success after going through a strict idol raising process that creates their

aesthetics image to match the high expectations of the industry culture and the standards of the fans (Kong, 2021). The KMI requires the artists to be versatile, including excellence in both singing and dancing skills (Lourenco, 2020). An artist's multitasking abilities and individual charisma create professional perfectionism in music, vocals, dancing, visual presentation, and entertainment. These are considered the standard qualities of K-pop idols (Oh & Park, 2012). Apart from the artists themselves, the product category for KMI also includes videos, audios, concerts, fan-sign events, and other hi-touch events. The K-pop music industry develops its music production, lighting, and visual scenic design on stage in keeping with the overall high quality of its products. These elements are one part of the de facto products integrated into world tour concerts. These concerts constitute the industry's mainstream revenue. In 2011, the K-pop concert market took over USD 131.7 million, largely due to changing the focus on exporting K-pop concerts around the globe (Chang & Shin, 2020). Offline events and activities are also included in KMI product portfolios, such as fan-sign, hi-touch events, and K-pop fan meeting events.

Technology has permeated people's lives globally. In the present times, digital music can be called a product that generates revenues through subscription fees, pay-per-listen fees, and payments for downloading video or audio content (Aguiar & Martens, 2016). Some Korean music companies also organize brand collaborations to diversify their revenues. Thailand is a fertile fandom territory in Asia that the Korean music industry sees as the priority target market (Onsee, 2020). Fandoms worldwide have the same characteristics of cherishing their artists in a behavioral paradigm that

can be perceived through the practice of engaging in media interaction within the fan community (Nakha, 2016). Overall, the above discussion suggests that the product shows the relationship between the K-pop music industry's products and customer loyalty, this study hypothesizes that:

**H1: Various tangible and intangible products influence Thai fans' loyalty to the Korean music industry.**

**Place** - The place element of the marketing mix includes the product placement or distribution channel, which denotes the process of delivering the products from the producer to the customers. It is the method that enables the purchasing of products, where they are bought, and how customers access the products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Place also refers to the locations where the products are distributed and to the intermediaries and partners who have a role in distribution, depending on which distribution channels are selected to implement the business strategy (Luenendonk, 2019).

The KMI uses various online platforms to sell transformed commodities. These platforms include VLive or the V App. Ham and Lee (2020) refer to the popularity of video content on live-streaming services on VLive, with a constantly increasing consumer demand for South Korean live-streaming services. Thailand is ranked second-highest for the number of foreign fans paying for live-streaming content and entertainment agencies' video content from South Korea. This indicates that Thai fans have the spending power to access their idols irrespective of the type of channels available to them.

In another case, worldwide music audiences are consuming music through both free and paid

music streaming applications. In 2018, music streaming drew 278 million subscribers worldwide, and then in 2019, global music streaming revenues achieved USD 11.4 billion (Watson, 2020). In Thailand, the most popular music streaming platform is Joox. It has captured 56% of the market share by offering Video Karaoke and Live Korean Concert features, including unique content in cooperation with international artists, to serve their users. The KMI shows coherence in the place where the K-pop music industry offers its music to serve the fans and generate customer loyalty. Hence, the current study hypothesizes that:

**H2: Online platform distribution channels facilitate the consumption of K-pop digital music among Thai fans and promote loyalty to the Korean music industry.**

**Price** - In the marketing mix, the price is the amount that customers have to pay to get the product or enjoy its service features (Solomon, 2009). The cost of a product is related to three main aspects: 1) It should help the company achieve its profits and pricing strategy objectives. 2) The product's price is reflected in the customers' expectations and perceptions of the brand while the product's value concurrently conveys the brand positioning implicitly. 3) The pricing strategy helps determine the efficiency of the marketing campaign as a running marketing test in terms of price, thereby enabling sustained marketing performance effectiveness (Kienzler & Kowalkovski, 2021).

The K-pop music industry separates its price strategies depending on the product categories like setting penetrate pricing on digital music products and setting high price premiums on physical merchandise. Freemium streaming

platforms like YouTube and Spotify receive revenues from ads, Apple offers paid-only services for its music streaming service (Ingham, 2015). The KMI is engaged in intense rivalry in the pricing market (Parc & Kawashima, 2018). Online music has made the price too low to compete in a bidding war with music piracy sites (Williamson, 2011). The industry recently underwent a transformation from the revolution of streaming platforms offering free services or charging very low prices. In Thailand, the top three online music streaming services are Joox, Spotify, and Apple Music which dominate the overall market share (Tangsiri, 2017). Contrastingly, even though the online platform offers music at low prices, the K-pop music industry sells diversified physical merchandise at high prices as part of its product categories strategy. The K-pop music companies offer several merchandise collections to be sold domestically at high prices and to be shipped overseas at expensive rates (Belinky, 2019). Moreover, the effect of K-pop's popularity across the world has also created brand collaborations in various forms (TrendHunter, 2021). For example, The Fila Korea clothes special-edition is represented by the idols, and the new packaging is designed with other industries to cross-sell the products. The price of the products is high because of the trademark license. Since K-Pop was introduced in Thailand, the fandoms have grown to include fans with various careers and of different ages. One of the methods fans by which fans show their support is by purchasing their idol's merchandise. Thai fans remain strong as they purchase even the expensive products to show their loyalty. Therefore, the current study hypothesizes that:

### H3: The pricing of K-pop music and its merchandise influences Thai fans' commitment to the Korean music industry.

**Promotion** - The promotion element in the marketing mix is the communication between the seller and the potential target market. Promotion includes searching for efficient channels to convey information to the target audiences in a way that dominates their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards the brand, products, and services offered by the company (Routray, 2019). In addition, promotion helps the company contemplate how to capture the target's attention and convert their interest into purchases and eventually loyalty. It means understanding the target audience's persona and knowing the competitor's competitive advantages in order to reach the right customer through the right channel at the right time with competitive products and services (PFC, 2021).

The revolution of social media and digital channels has played a pivotal role in raising K-pop music awareness among global fans. Social media makes almost all of the content accessible, free, and easy to share globally. Selective media diversification matches the product with the consumer. Social media platforms such as YouTube impacts B2C in the long term. In case of KMI, concurrently, the audiences and fandoms create video clips to show their reactions when watching the music videos or create video clips introducing each member in their favorite band (Oh & Park, 2012). YouTube is a productive channel for promoting K-pop music to the international market (Gu, 2020). South Korea accounts for the largest single national group of viewers watching K-pop videos on YouTube, followed by Indonesia. Accounting for 8.1% of all views of K-pop content

on YouTube, Thailand ranks as the K-pop industry's third largest market, generating around 2.1 billion views. In the aspect of sharing videos and spending time watching K-pop videos on YouTube, Thailand spends the most time watching K-pop content. Twitter is also a powerful interpenetration tool to promote K-pop music, with 6.7 billion K-pop-related tweets made globally on the social media channel in 2020.

The more time fans spend consuming the content, the deeper the attachment that is cultivated (Herbrink, 2020). The communications are contemporized by conveying profound marketing messages as personalized messages to express special significance, representing the band's relationship with the fans (Kim, Hwang, & Kim, 2021). The para-social relationship is upheld and maintained from the K-pop entities which create this state but also by the fans themselves (Eaglehawk, 2019). Finally, the fans' online activities become a way of sharing their lifestyle and experiences of K-pop artists and expressing their adoration for them worldwide in online media. According to Onsee (2020), studies related to Thai youths' perspectives of Thai artists in the Korean music industry show that social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which are known to be the media channels that Thai youths use to access the news and use as part of their routine life, are now among the most potent types of tools used to publicize pop culture.

Recently, gamification marketing techniques are utilized to hook fans into the content and engage them while promoting their idols in various ways (Yung, 2020). This type of broadcasting encourages emotional involvement with idol selection among the audience and creates a strong feeling of being loyal fans (Boman, 2019).

Nowadays, True Visions and many other Thai broadcasting channels provide various Korean variety shows to give the latest K-pop trends to Thai audiences. Promotion through offline events also helps the activated channel reach attention among a localized target and deliver direct active experiences to the audiences (Crook, 2019).

The K-pop music industry also promotes its idols in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaigns to create positive images and love of the band and the company outside the sector. In return, their fandoms follow their role models to generate several campaigns to leverage positive social impact in their countries, ultimately proliferating the band's good reputation worldwide (Yung, 2020). For instance, BTS and its label Big Hit Entertainment in partnership with the Korean Committee for UNICEF affiliated with the United Nations since 2017 launched the global "love myself" campaign to end violence and neglect against children and young people (Unicef, 2021). The main aim of the campaign was to protect and support the South Korea victims of school violence and sexual assault, while also providing an education to local communities on violence prevention to make the world a better place to live (Lovemyself.org, 2021).

As a result, fans donate huge amounts for charitable purposes. In a recent campaign, the American fandoms donated over \$1 million to U.S. non-profit organizations dedicated to racial justice (Bhandari, 2020). Thai fans also come together to volunteer on activities that positively impact the community, such as donating blood, raising funds for the poor people, organizing sports days, engaging in fun activities, addressing health concerns, and supporting charities (Wongwudthianun, 2015). As a subculture in society, the fandom imitates its K-pop

idols and gets inspiration to follow their philanthropic trends or expand into similar activities (Jenol & Pazil, 2020). Based on the relationship between the KMI and Thai fans involves promoting strategies that attach the KMI directly to Thai fandoms by promoting K-pop idol stories, the current study hypothesizes that:

**H4: The variety of promotion methods influences Thai fans' loyalty towards the Korean music industry.**

**People** - People are the element most involved, both directly and indirectly, with the products, service, and customer experiences. Not all of the people involved have direct contact with the consumer at the front line but they still play a role in linking the brand and the customer in various aspects depending on their roles and adaptive capabilities to explore customers' needs, substantiate their demand, innovate to fulfill customers' needs, and manage the support services to deliver and introduce the products to the end consumers in each touchpoint (Alshammari, 2021; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). The people element of the marketing mix is meant to be the component which is most relevant to how the customers' experience the products or services they use in order to acquire more new customers and retain existing customers and develop their loyalty (Acutt, 2020).

In the KMI, it is necessary to have people who can produce excellent quality music that will appeal to audiences worldwide. The composers and producers are essential ones for making music that is popular and catchy (Lizzie, 2014). The KMI instills foreign musical techniques that attract the international audience's attention and motivate producers and songwriters to create catchy, repetitive melodies with easy-to-pronounce Korean

and English words (Zhang et al., 2020). Parc and Kim (2020) studied how visual image plays an essential role in the KMI. Korean entertainment companies intend to elevate the choreography to satisfy the consumer's visual desire. The choreographers play a vital role in the global K-Pop craze by creating the compelling dance routines performed by the idols with originality in powerful, synchronized and eye-catching choreography. The K-pop music companies hire both domestic and international choreographers (Vandenberg, 2020). Under the 7Ps marketing mix theory's conceptual framework, the relationship between the K-pop music industry and the relevant people is based on developing the people to achieve high standards of quality that are appreciated by Therefore, the current study hypothesizes that:

**H5: The people components of K-pop music's holistic qualities affect Thai fans' loyalty to the Korean music industry.**

**Process** - Process covers the workflow of activities or procedure before the interaction between the customers and the business (Friesner, 2014b; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The processes refer to the methods applied to achieve an outcome with added value through each stage of input, throughput, and output models. Process includes the strategies used to deliver the products and services to the customers in a way that creates more customer-friendly experiences. To do this successfully, the business needs to understand the customer's journey to ensure that customers are satisfied and receive positive experiences (Tseng et al. 1999). Process also refers to the proper marketing and business processes which produce outcomes that serve large audiences, generate high demand and repeat selling, hold customer's loyalty, and

stimulate feedback on how to improve (Acutt, 2021).

Therefore, the creativity of adding values and adapting to technologies to deliver K-pop music products and services makes the KMI popular globally and able to overcome any obstacles.

E-commerce supports economy-wide benefits to all countries, specifically for businesses engaged in international trade (Terzi, 2011). The music companies used online stores to sell their merchandise and CD albums. As South Korea is a country with a high evolution of technology, some companies are applying artificial intelligence (AI) to create virtual idols in a new project to raise the customer experience.

The Korean music industry also applies the process aspect to enable Thai fans to experience hands-on participation in activities such as the latest BTS virtual concert called "Bang Bang Con: The Live." Under the conceptual framework of the 7Ps marketing mix theory in the process element, the KMI applies creativity in the form of added values and adaptability to new technologies to overcome any obstacles and deliver products and services to global audiences in time. In this way, the KMI is able to maintain its relationships with its fans and build customer loyalty. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

**H6: The processes of using creativity to add values and adapt to new technology to deliver products and service positively affect Thai fans' loyalty to the Korean music industry.**

**Physical evidence** - Physical evidence supports a business which provides a service to its customers. It refers to the physical environment surrounding the place where the services are consumed. Physical evidence includes ambient

elements such as the smell, lighting, sound, interior design and theme, and spatial layout of the customer touchpoint, as well as the various forms of corporate brandings like signs, logos, symbols, employee uniforms, tickets, websites or online review articles, receipts, packaging, and anything else that expresses the corporate image and information (Friesner, 2014c; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The music industry has moved into an age of digital distribution (Wikström, 2021). However, those K-pop physical products were created to satisfy loyal fandoms. These include items like photo cards, official light sticks, passport cases, clothing items, posters, dolls, and idol's collaboration goods by displaying all the merchandise on showcases and posting pictures of their collections on social media (Tan, 2021). The KMI often opens physical pop-up stores to sell various products and experience-related merchandise.

Many companies in Thailand have responded to Thai fans' interest in K-pop products and merchandise. In 2016, Show DC established Thailand's first Korean-themed shopping and entertainment mall which included a four-star hotel. This venture was developed in partnership with YG Entertainment and Lotte Duty Free with the aim of being ASEAN's first retail and entertainment center offering both foreign tourists and Thai K-pop fans the opportunity to enjoy integrated Korean entertainment experiences with shopping and dining (Suchiva, 2016). Under the conceptual framework of the 7Ps marketing mix theory, in the part of the K-pop music industry's physical evidence, it contributes to shifting the business to serve the Thai audiences enjoyable experiences and created loyalty towards the KMI. This study hypothesizes that:

**H7: The physical evidence in terms of physical products and offline flag store events influence Thai fans' loyalty to the Korean music industry.**

## Method

This study uses quantitative methodology to explain a particular phenomenon (Bhatia, 2018). The study uses primary data to examine essential factors and characteristics under the 7Ps marketing mix elements of the K-pop music industry's impact on Thai customers' loyalty (Fluet, 2020). An online survey was used to collect data and the questions allowed respondents to select their answer from multiple choices, with some questions requiring the participants to select their response to a particular statement from a five-point Likert scale to allow the respondents to express their opinions and enable many variations such as frequency, quality, etc. to be measured quantitatively (McLeod, 2019). In addition, the survey offered some open-ended questions to give respondents the freedom to share more detail and experiences in order to generate a dramatic and comprehensive perspective and enable the researcher to apperceive the respondents' thought processes (Questback, 2015).

For this research, in the part of data collection and questionnaire design, the seven critical elements of the marketing mix—product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence—and demographic, psychographic and fandom-related questions covering a total of 113 attributes were included. Furthermore, 30 sets of pretest questionnaires were distributed and collected to pilot test the survey. The researchers used Cronbach's alpha coefficients to test the level of reliability and validity of the scale items.

Cronbach's alpha analysis revealed alpha value of 0.949 for the part of the 7Ps marketing mix. This can be interpreted using the rule of thumb as showing excellent results indicating the satisfactory level of

construct validity and internal consistency of this questionnaire. The details of the results are shown in the following table 1 and 2 below:

**Table 1** Reliability Score from Cronbach's Alpha Analysis Test – Case Processing Summary (Scale: All Variables)

		N	%
Case	valid	30	100.0
	Exclude	0	.0
	Total	30	100.0

a. Listwise Deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Source – Author (2021)

**Table 2** Reliability Score from Cronbach's Alpha Analysis Test – Reliability Statistics (Scale: All Variables)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.949	91

Source – Author (2021)

For the part on Thai fans' loyalty, including the psychology section, in which all of the results were integrated as dependent variables, the

Cronbach's Alpha score was .90, which is interpreted as excellent. Table 3 shows the Cronbach's alpha values for the separate sections of questions.

**Table 3** Reliability Score from Cronbach's Alpha Analysis by Factors

Factors	Number of Questions	Cronbach's Alpha Scores
Product	9	.68
Place	4	.55
Price	5	.59
Promotion	6	.67
People	8	.84
Process	5	.65
Physical Evidence	7	.75
Fandom	47	.91
<b>Overall Reliability of the Questionnaire</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>.94</b>

Source – Author (2021)

The target population is Thai people from across the country who are interested in K-pop culture. The wide range of locations, ages, education levels, careers, and income levels that formed the respondents' selection criteria. The sample size was 385. According to the research of Highfield, Harrington, and Bruns (2012), Twitter is a communication technology favored by mature audiences on the fandom context. Moreover, a summary of social network users in Thailand during July 2020 reported that the most significant age groups active on Twitter were Gen Z and Gen Y (TWFAgency, 2020) between the ages 22 and 38 years old (Dimock, 2019). Therefore, the research used a purposive sampling method combined with snowball sampling method. The researcher asked the account owners to retweet the online survey to share it with other followers who could then participate voluntarily, with this method effective in generating an abundance of data. With the aim of accessing the opinions of diversified respondents from different backgrounds to reduce this bias, self-selection is also used as the sampling method to allow units or individuals to participate in the survey on a voluntary basis. The online survey was distributed to Twitter and Facebook K-pop fandom groups and to Line Openchat targeting people who are involved with K-pop music, learn the Korean language or are interested in Korean culture. This research used descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics (Bhatia, 2018) to analyze the study data.

## Data analysis

This research used a quantitative data analysis method, which contributed to the first level of analysis, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics (Bhatia, 2018).

Descriptive analysis helps to provide certain numbers and looks for data patterns to summarize the data and is mainly used for analyzing a single variable; it is often called univariate analysis, which does not explain its causes or relationships (Leys et al., 2019). This study used: 1.) standard deviation, which statistically measures the dispersion of the dataset to know how much the data spread out related to its mean or average (Glen, 2014), with the more spread out the data points are from their mean, the higher the deviation within the data set which then also results in higher standard deviation (Hargrave, 2021) and 2.) percentages represented by each category within a group, out of the total (100%) related to a large group of respondents (Bhatia, 2018; Elliott, 2021).

Inferential statistical analysis helps to make inferences, judge the probability or predict what happens in the real world in the entire population that is of interest to the research and the data they provide, from which inferential statistics data are given significance in identifying the differences between groups and finding relationships among the variables of the data set (Jansen & Warren, 2020; Trochim, 2021b). In this part, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the cause and effect in the relationships between variables that impact the consistency of one variable causing the other one to move (Jansen & Warren, 2020). In other words, it dissects the relationships between a single dependent variable (DV) and several independent

variables in the form of straight-line relationships (IV) (Hair et al., 1998).

The  $\beta$  (beta) values called the regression coefficients (or beta coefficient) were obtained from the regression analysis, which enable the calculation of the practical values for  $y$  (the predicted value on the dependent variable) within the regression equilibrium (Gohary & O.A.S., 2021). Therefore, the Beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficient represents the average amount of change in the dependent variable when the independent variable increases by a standard deviation and the other independent variables are held constant and vice versa, which means the significant coefficient was shown. The correlation

between the obtained and predicted values of  $y$  is relevant to the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Everitt & Skrondal, 2010).

## Result and Discussion

This research used multiple regression analysis to analyzed the 7ps marketing mix (independent variables) and the customer loyalty in term of fandom (dependent variable) by using the stepwise method together with a dummy for demographics to find out the appropriate model. Step-wise regression was used to explain variances in the dependent variable.

**Table 4** Regression Analysis

R	R	Adjusted	Std.	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson	
				Square	R Square	Error of the Estimate	R	F	df	
							Square	Change	Change	
.73	.54	.53	.31	.00	4.04	1	434	.04	1.95	

Source – Author (2021)

From table, the Regression Analysis results of the most appropriate model where the p-value is 0.04 lower than 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis referring to a nonlinear relationship

among the independent, dependent variable and demographics of this study, which means the relationship of the 7ps marketing mix and customer loyalty in terms of fandom has strong evidence.

**Table 5** Coefficient the most appropriate result of the multiple regression Analysis (Stepwise analysis)

Model		Coefficients <sup>2</sup>		Collinearity Statistics	
		Standardized Coefficients			
		Beta			
Independent variable and Demographic.	(Constant)		.10		
	Composite_Phy	.29	.00		
	Composite_Place	.22	.00		
	Composite_Process	.21	.00		
	Composite_Product	.17	.00		
	Composite_Price	.13	.00		
	Age = Under 20	-.07	.04		

a. Dependent Variable : Composite\_DV

Source – Author (2021)

From table, the most appropriate result of the multiple regression analysis by using the Stepwise method, showing the statistical significance between customer loyalty (fandom) and several independent variables. Illustrates as the composite of physical evidence ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), the composite of place ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), the composite of the process ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), the composite of the product ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ), the composite of price ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ) and demographics as age under 20 years old ( $\beta = -0.07$ ,  $p < 0.04$ ) which we reject the null hypothesis to support alternative hypothesis which apprised that there is a linear relationship between customer

loyalty as a dependent variable and five marketing mix factors as independent variables and the demographics.

With inferential statistics, the analysis is indicated that 7Ps marketing mix factors affecting customer loyalty towards the Korean music industry are; product, price, place, process, and physical evidence. Among the significant demographic variables, Thailand's target persona showed that females aged under 20 years old and between 20-30 years old—high school and undergraduate education mostly living in Bangkok and metropolitan areas are major fans.

**Table 6** Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Sig.	Beta	P-value	Results
H1 : Product→Customer loyalty	.00	.17	.00	Accepted
H2 : Place→Customer loyalty	.00	.22	.00	Accepted
H3 : Price→Customer loyalty	.00	.13	.00	Accepted
H4 : Promotion→Customer loyalty	.18	-	-	Rejected
H5 : People→Customer loyalty	.20	-	-	Rejected
H6 : Process→Customer loyalty	.00	.21	.00	Accepted
H7 : Physical evidence→Customer loyalty	.00	.29	.00	Accepted

Source – Author (2021)

Coherently with the hypothesis testing result, the research findings were summarized as follows.

### 1. Product

The statistical analysis results showed a significant relationship between product and customer loyalty which the p-value is 0.00 lower than 0.05. This study was able to infer the KMI characteristics in the Thai market from the Thai audience's perceptions and satisfaction, which refer to the artists' versatility and skills in their primary position in the band. The KMI's products are adapted to align with the changes that integrate innovative services and technology that go beyond the customers' expectations to surprise and delight customers continually by augmenting products and services attuned as potential products for global success (Kotler, 1967). Moreover, the survey questionnaire asked the music's elements that reflect the reason of the respondent's preference in K-pop genre which the respondents showed that they strongly agree with these questions. For example, K-pop music has catchy melodies and offers English and Korean words in the song that makes you sing along with the song easily, or K-pop

rhythm, tune and lyric touch your feelings and make you involved with the song both dance songs and ballad songs, or K-pop music create the lyrics that motivate, inspire and abet you through the song. The result pointing in the same direction of the previous study of Howard and Lekakul (2018). Hence, Thai audiences positively perceives the product qualities, with high involvement and commitment to the product.

### 2. Price and Place

The hypothesis testing determined that both the place and price influenced customer loyalty in Thailand and the statistical analysis result of both elements showed a significant relationship. In terms of digital channel product distribution, the primary data showed that Spotify is the most popular platform in Thailand that people used to listen to music, as measured by the consumers' usage. Overall, Thai audiences access K-pop music and content through several primary online platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and Vlive which corresponds to the previous study in the literature review (Ham and Lee, 2020). Moreover, the result from the psychographic data indicated that Thai

audiences respond to new online platforms such as Tik Tok, Weverse, and Lysn. The online platforms mainly offer free services or cheap monthly subscription fees (Funk, 2018; Williamson, 2011). These free or low-cost models conform to the Thai audience's willingness to pay prices in the range of 50-200 Baht/month, with monthly fees of 50-100 Baht/month and 100-200 Baht/month the most chosen by this study's respondents.

### 3. Physical evidence

The statistical analysis result identified the significant relationship between physical evidence and customer loyalty. The physical evidence, such as a pop-up store or temporary sightseeing spots in the form of offline events, is significant for emerging business opportunities in Thailand. Almost all of this study's respondents wanted to have more places to be able to buy authentic K-pop collectable items, participate in experiences, and maintain their relationships with the entertainment companies, bands, and artists. Tangibly, digital solutions cannot bring a brand's world to life, so the physical evidence is the answer. In addition, the results show Thai audiences are attracted to the physical places that offer a lively atmosphere and provide various exciting activities. The sound, lighting, and display layout of the store should therefore show uniqueness, aesthetics and attractiveness. This statistic significantly coincides with the current business circumstances where the first official BTS pop-up store opened in Bangkok, Thailand, at the EmQuartier Department Store from May 1- July 25. Thai fans helped to promote the event via Twitter and buy the merchandise for their collections. Also, many fans bought merchandise to sell to other fans who live in the provinces outside Bangkok (Fronde,

2021; Beam-Twitter, 2021; Kimtae\_store Twitter, 2021).

Furthermore, the research findings also suggested that the companies can consider building multispaces that include a café and K-pop shop with interchangeable art galleries providing the decoration for potential customers and fans are something that were identified from the results of the survey about particular KMI projects that match the respondents' interests. Thai audiences are attracted to the physical places that offer a lively atmosphere and provide various exciting activities. The sound, lighting, and display layout of the store should therefore show uniqueness, aesthetics and attractiveness.

### 4. Process

The results indicate that process is one of the elements that impacts customer loyalty. The statistical analysis result depicted significant relationship. Consistently, the products and services could be distributed worldwide easily by the digital advancements and creative ideas in terms of delivery process. This study mentions that the virtual live streaming concerts or online interactive events pleased the Thai audiences and maintained their relationships with K-pop companies, artists, and other fans while world tours were not possible. The companies' online stores can offer an alternative method for buying authentic K-pop merchandise through the always-on channel. This outcome related to the secondary data in literature review and Thai fan's feedback their impressive through online blog about the BTS; Bang Bang Concert (Fourleafclover, 2020). Besides, the companies' online stores can offer an alternative method for buying authentic K-pop merchandise

through the always-on channel to serve the need of Thai customers.

##### 5. Promotion and People

The elements that statistical analysis result demonstrated insignificant include are promotion and people. This study refers to promotions in the aspect of the communication channels used to promote the KMI through online media, offline events and project, which the researcher assumes should be a factor with high involvement to create customer loyalty. Conversely, a relationship with the Thai market does not exist. The possibility is that some media channels are considered to be places where digital media nowadays is interchangeable and has multiple functionalities (Breitwieser, 2020). This interpretation corresponds to the respondent's feedback of the research which show the promotion channel in this study as the place or distribution channel where they consume the K-pop music.

The people in this research are people who produce K-pop music's holistic qualities in several aspects like producers, songwriters and choreographer which those people hand-on their accomplishment in form of product or artist's performance in the public eyes lead to weak outcome relevant to the measurement. The findings of this study are similar to previous studies such as (e.g., Lizzie, 2014; Parc and Kim, 2020; Vandenberg, 2020).

Overall, the demographic data from 441 subjects with several categories, including age, gender, education, status, occupation, income, career, nationality, and location were collected. In the summary of demographic data, most respondents emerged as Thai females, ages around 20 - 29, and lived in Bangkok. The respondents are single. They have an education level in the Bachelor's degree who

are undergraduate students and employees with income lower than 15,000 baht/month.

The psychographic data also found that the top five Korean popular bands in Thailand are BTS, NCT, Exo, GOT7, and Girls' Generation. The majority of Thai audiences listen to the music via YouTube and Spotify. Moreover, Thai audiences interact with the idols on Twitter and Instagram. Thai audiences are willing to pay around 50-200 Baht/month of monthly subscription payment. A majority of Thai fandom spend not over 500 Baht/month on K-pop merchandises.

From the demographic and psychographic data, the stepwise multiple regression analysis pointed at significant demographic variables in the ages under 20 years old as showed in Table 5. It can be inferred that the generation Z group is more loyal to K-pop and that K-pop music infiltrates their everyday experience seamlessly through internet access, technology, and social media their entire lives (Dimock, 2019; Kang, 2014). Previous studies defined that K-Pop fans are typically young females (Trzcińska, 2018), and Thailand's Twitter users have the highest female ratio of users (Sehl, 2020). In line with the findings of Kim et al. (2020), almost all respondents were millennials. It is notable that among the target groups, millennials are the primary consumers of KMI. They are in their 30s, have spending power, and have reached their prime spending years following the age and life stage (Buxton, 2021). Millennials are likely to purchase online and are willing to pay more for items that offer unique experiences like luxury products, popular items, technology, and fashion. Therefore, the brand should identify its values and morals and convey them to the audience creatively and

authentically. Also, in line with Nurudin (2019), the current depicted that K-pop culture still influences millennials' attitudes and behaviors.

## **Business Implications**

In relation to the 7Ps marketing mix factors, the strategies that businesses can implement as identified in this study are divided into three strategies as follows:

### **Align the products with life stage marketing**

Regarding Gen Z, the target group of this study has a long lifetime ahead of them and are also susceptible to change as technology evolves. Instead of focusing on a person's demographic factors, like age, location, or education, it is better to select a strategy that reflects the lifestyle that is different for each generation. Companies can position differentiated product lines, product categories, themes, and content to groups of people who are going through the same life stage together, and serve the needs that cohere to each stage of the customer's life through life-stage marketing (WARC, 2021; Mittera, 2021).

### **Brand equity and company activities reveal the unique identity of the vision related to the customer's perspectives**

Nielsen (2021) stated that it is not entirely true that Gen Z has all the same characteristics as millennials because each generation has unique traits and viewpoints. For example, Gen Z are digital natives who are highly educated, social, creative and good entrepreneurs who can impact the business orientation to respond to coming changes. Francis and Hoefel (2018) identified three categories that companies could focus on in order to adapt to

Gen Z's future consumption habits and secure their patronage: 1) accessibility is the key rather than possession; 2) they consume the brands and products that echo their expression and individual identity; and 3) consumption involves ethical concerns.

In addition, Cheung (2012) observed that the Gen Z and brand relationship provides distinctions between the needed factors of the brand equities to expand the understanding. Gen Z focuses on quality, authenticity, and availability. One size does not fit all. The development of media platforms and apps potentially involves serving and interacting 24/7 on various channels and devices. Sequential to creating brand enthusiasm is enabling customers to have fast and active engagement to share their opinions of brands as co-creators expressing their attitudes and preferences. Lastly, it is important for real brand value to be transparent and to react practically, not just offering an empty promise. Creating a strong connection with Gen Z through their mature and transparent authentic brand vision in the form of brand equity and its products and services is an opportunity to make them loyal customers (Keller, 2008; Aaker, 2020; Cheung, 2012).

### **Pricing and customer loyalty programs serve millennials and Gen Z**

K-pop customers in Thailand think that K-pop physical products are rather costly with high shipping fees. To attune the pricing strategies that match target audiences behavior and purchasing power while also responding to business opportunities regarding online stores' promotions and activities, the researcher suggests that

companies consider value-based pricing, which means rather than focusing only on production and delivery cost, also highlighting the value of the product's functionality for potential customers (Huizer, 2019). Considering that millennials and gen Z are the primary target, they tend to trust the brands they grew up with and maintain their brand relationships for a lifetime. A loyalty program in the form of a reward campaign which sets the purchasing tier that customers have to pay in cash to acquire the reward, such as redemption points, percentage rebates or privilege services, can drive new and existing customers to buy and spend more over time and extend the relationship between the company and the customer (Brien & Charles, 2004).

### Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

This study refers to promotions in the aspect of the communication channels used to promote the KMI through online media, offline events and project, which the researcher assumes

should be a factor with high involvement to create customer loyalty. Conversely, a relationship with the Thai market does not exist. The possibility is that some media channels are considered to be places where digital media nowadays is interchangeable and has multiple functionalities. Another aspect comes from using media channels for promotions the penetrate people's lifestyles to form quick attachments. A specific topic can be used to find the most efficient promotional impact of psychological marketing to cause a strong bond and loyalty even though the broad background of the sample is not a problem to this study. In contrast, defining the sample's qualifications and collecting data by using face-to-face interviews would enable some deeper demographic and information insights. Methodology wise, future studies can replicate the current study with novel research designs such as longitudinal surveys to test the relationships between different marketing mix variables and fandom (or loyalty).

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