

# The Impact of the Services Marketing Mix (7ps) on Customer Satisfaction as a Mediating Factor on Loyalty, Intentions, and Profitability in Indian Travel Agencies

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Mba 4<sup>th</sup> Sem

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## ABSTRACT

Services marketing mix (7Ps) has a significant role in promoting customer's satisfaction and loyalty. The present study, using structural equation modeling WarpPLS version (7) is used, aims at investigating the influences of (7Ps) on tourist's loyalty. In addition, it measures the mediator effect of tourist's satisfaction, consumer purchase intentions, and company profitability. Findings revealed that all dimensions have positively affected tourist's satisfaction directly, and tourist's loyalty indirectly. Consumer purchase intentions and company profitability are partial mediators between tourist's satisfaction and tourist's loyalty. The present study provides a deep understanding of services marketing mix strategies that stay needed for keeping a long-term link between managers of travel services and tourists. Several implications for travel agencies managers were suggested to achieve customer loyalty and consequently guarantee their company profitability.

## KEYWORDS

Services marketing mix; tourist satisfaction; tourist loyalty; consumer purchase intentions; profitability; travel agencies; India

## Introduction

The tourism industry in India is increasing quickly and attracting more competitive markets as new travel agencies or establishments enter the business and offer-related products and services, such as: touring vacation, cruise, visiting friends and relatives (VFR), resort vacation, Umrah and pilgrimage/ haj, Eco-tourism, and historical sites. Services marketing mix help understanding the forecasters of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bojanic, 2003; Oflac et al., 2015). Numerous studies have been piloted using the 4Ps of marketing mix to help understanding customer's satisfaction and customer's loyalty (i.e., Abd Wahab et al., 2016; Goi, 2009; Kadhim et al., 2016; Kotler et al., 2010; Kwon, 2011, March; Ling, 2007; Magatef, 2015; Nuseir & Madanat, 2015; Sudari et al., 2019). However, only a few surveys have used the services marketing mix (7Ps), and the majority has not looked at the impact of the services marketing mix on increasing tourist satisfaction and loyalty within the Egyptian travel agencies. (i.e., Al-Debi & Ashraf, 2014; Khasawneh & Mustafa, 2019; Al Muala & Al Qurneh, 2012; Salman et al., 2017; Sarker et al., 2012). This study investigates the influence of services marketing mix on tourist satisfaction directly and customer loyalty indirectly. It measures the interactions between customer satisfaction on tourist purchase intentions, tourist loyalty, and company profitability on one side hand. On the other side, the effect tourist loyalty on tourist purchase intentions and firm profitability in related studies (i.e., Almohaimmeed, 2019; Kadhim et al., 2016; Al Muala & Al Qurneh, 2012; Othman et al., 2019; Quang, 2017). According to Othman et al. (2019) customer loyalty plays vital role in hospitality and tourism sector. When tourists satisfied a travel service provider, then it is more likely to predict their loyalty outcomes. Also, in order to inform their friends and family about their positive relation (Quang, 2017).

As a result, tourism industry planners should take into account the latest aspects of the 7Ps fundamentals for pleasing visitors. This would aid tourism operators in improving their schedules, strategies, methods, and policies to maximize visitor satisfaction and firm profitability, (Kadhim et al., 2016; Leask, 2010) and (Mill, 2002) realize high levels of tourist's satisfaction and loyalty in the tourism business sector (Mill, 2002). Egyptian tourism business sector provides a variety of services to travelers, that is, Umrah and pilgrimage, accommodation, transportation, tickets, tour packages, etc. (Othman et al., 2019). Furthermore, any travel agent to be effective in today's competitive marketplace increasingly, it must provide a high-quality product/service that satisfies tourist desire and needs (i.e., Jalil & Abd, 2009;

Khasawneh & Mustafa, 2019; Sarker et al., 2012). The findings presented in this study would have a significant impact on the tourism industry whereby the 7Ps will be given due highlighting by Egyptian travel agencies to keep their customers continual backup and purchase of their products/services (Satit et al., 2012).

Based on the above mentioned, there is a dearth in measuring the impact of the services marketing mix on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in the Egyptian travel agencies.

Consequently, this study will add to the existing literature and managerial practices in several ways. First, the main contribution of the present research is investigating the impact of services marketing mix in Egyptian travel agencies as perceived by tourists. Second, this research introduces a positive expectation of the impact of services marketing mix (7Ps) in promoting customer's satisfaction and loyalty. Third, it measured the mediator role of tourist's satisfaction, consumer purchase intentions, and company profitability.

The findings of the study provide practical implications and a deep understanding of services marketing mix strategies that highly needed for keeping a long-term connection between managers of travel services and tourists. Moreover, this study guides managers who were constantly devoting their managerial and financial resources in promoting customer loyalty.

### Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

It is worth noting that this study adopts and integrates partially the research models developed in ease studies (Almohaimmed, 2019; Kadhim et al., 2016; Al Muala & Al Qurneh, 2012; Othman et al., 2019; Quang, 2017) to investigate the influence of services marketing mix on tourist satisfaction directly and customer loyalty indirectly. On one hand, it measures the interactions between customer satisfaction and consumer purchase intentions, customer loyalty, and profitability. The effect of customer loyalty on consumer purchase intentions and company profitability on the other hand.

#### *Product and customer satisfaction*

Currently, tourism industry is made up of different industries, such as hotels, airlines, travel agencies, etc. They combine together to provide travel experience. Tourism product is a bundle of complex benefits that meet tourist needs (Salman et al., 2017). Other scholars (i.e., Sudari et al., 2019; Sukamto & Lumintan, 2015; Vassiliadis et al., 2006) reported that tourism product is something that can be offered for attraction and consumption such as physical objects, services, tourism programs, tour vacation, historical sites and tourism destinations (Magatef, 2015; Quang, 2017). For this reason, travel agencies focus on how to satisfy tourists and the product must be correctly improved and adapted to meet the needs and wants of the tourists (Othman et al., 2019). According to Kadhim et al. (2016), product affecting tourist satisfaction. In the same vein, extant studies (i.e., Kadhim et al., 2016; Quang, 2017; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukamto & Lumintan, 2015) has found an important positive association between product and tourist's satisfaction. Therefore, this study assumes the positive relationship between product and consumer satisfaction. Accordingly, the researcher proposes Hypothesis 1

***Hypothesis 1. Product is positively related to customer satisfaction.***

#### *Price and customer satisfaction*

According to Vassiliadis et al. (2006), price is the sum paid in return for the service given to a tourist. In tourism context, the price depends on several elements that include buying power customer, cost of service, service quality, marketing, promotion, and the segment that is targeted toward tourists (i.e., Al-Debi & Ashraf, 2014; Arizal et al., 2018; Al Muala & Al Qurneh, 2012). Consequently, price is a major factor in creating and maintaining long-standing between tourists and service providers (Kadhim et al., 2016). Because a tourist carefully perceives if he is getting the most benefit from the

service toward his spending (Sudari et al., 2019). Previous research has found a strong positive association between price and customer satisfaction. (i.e., Abd Wahab et al., 2016; Arizal et al., 2018; Kadhimi et al., 2016; Quang, 2017; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukanto & Lumintan, 2015; Verma & Singh, 2017). The results suggested that price is positively related to the customer satisfaction, and thus the following hypothesis is propositioned.

***Hypothesis 2. Price is significantly affected customer satisfaction.***

#### ***Place/Distribution and customer satisfaction***

Apparently, Al-Debi and Ashraf (2014) defined the place as the activities that are done to supply a product tourist. Additionally to this, tourists are using smartphones and tablets to purchase tourism products (Sukanto & Lumintan, 2015). In other words, place relates to location decisions and strategic distribution so that the product can go immediately to the target market (Kadhimi et al., 2016). According to Sudari et al. (2019) place is defined as direct and indirect channels to market, regional penetration, territorial reach, retail store, market size, catalogs, logistics, and order fulfillment are all examples of area. In addition, the place/distribution can aid the tourists to discover the products (Lahouel Samia & Saliha, 2014). Consequently, travel agencies must manage the schedules as well as the venue where visitors can conveniently access the items (Kadhimi et al., 2016). In the same vein, extant studies (i.e., Abd Wahab et al., 2016; Kadhimi et al., 2016; Quang, 2017; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukanto & Lumintan, 2015) investigate that there is a significant positive link between distribution and satisfaction. Based on the above, the current study supposed the following hypothesis.

***Hypothesis 3. Place is positively related to customer satisfaction.***

#### ***Promotion and customer satisfaction***

Promotion indications to any type of advertising communication used to persuade goal audiences of the relative qualities of a product and brand (Kadhimi et al., 2016). It helps marketers to make a characteristic and unique place in customer's mind (Bojanic, 2003). The purpose of promotion is to growth consciousness, create awareness, make sales or create brand loyalty to companies (Quang, 2017). Promotion is also one of the components in the marketing mix include personal selling, advertising, public relations, direct marketing publicity, sales promotions (Arizal et al., 2018), and may also include event advertising, exhibitions, shows and trade shows (Abd Wahab

et al., 2016). In tourism context, extent research (i.e., Arizal et al., 2018; Kadhimi et al., 2016; Quang, 2017; Sudari et al., 2019) mentions the sales for travel agencies is via study and forecast the tourism market, questionnaire, packaging, tourism product design, and pricing. In the same vein, extant studies (i.e., Abd Wahab et al., 2016; Arizal et al., 2018; Kadhimi et al., 2016; Quang, 2017; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukanto & Lumintan, 2015; Verma & Singh, 2017) investigate that there is a significant positive link between promotion and satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is postulated.

***Hypothesis 4. Promotion is positively influenced customer satisfaction.***

#### ***People (service employees) and customer satisfaction***

People are defined by Nuseir and Madanat (2015), as human resources in the tourism business. It plays an important role in performing, quality control, and individual buying in tourism and travel industry (Kotler et al., 2010). According to Sudari et al. (2019), successful service suppliers can satisfy tourists travel agencies requirements through human element, particularly face-to-face communication with the tourist. It is worthwhile to mention that operative's behavior plays a vital role in differentiating travel agencies services (Bojanic, 2003). Welcoming the tourist with a

smiling face, politeness, friendliness, understanding tourist's problems, etc. (Arizal et al., 2018; Quang, 2017). Kadhim et al. (2016), investigate that there is a significant link between people and satisfaction. Previous studies (i.e., Arizal et al., 2018; Kadhim et al., 2016; Verma & Singh, 2017) found that there is a significant positive relation- ship between people and satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated.

**Hypothesis 5.** *People is positively related to customer satisfaction.*

#### *Process and customer satisfaction*

According to Sarker et al. (2012, p. 275), the process discusses a mix of tourism wellness actions, schedules, techniques/mechanisms, the flow of activities, happenings, and routines that are delivered to tourists and practiced when the trip is on (Salman et al., 2017). In addition, **"trip planning and anticipa- tion, travel to the site/area, recollection, and trip planning packages"** are all part of the tourism process, according to (Sarker et al., 2012, p. 275). The trip planning packages consist of: maps, tourism attraction, destinations, location, quality of service offered, information regarding accommodation, information regarding transportation, plane trip, local food, quality souvenirs and

mementos (i.e., Hosseini, 2011; Kadhim et al., 2016; Kannan, 2009; Sarker et al., 2012; Wongsawat & Deebhijarn, 2019). According to Lahouel Samia and Saliha (2014), process provides information to passengers, such as the number of trips, journey time, destination, ticket prices, etc. In other words, processes provide travel agencies and employees to facilitate reservation, ticketing, and supply passengers with adequate information (Lahouel Samia & Saliha, 2014). In the same vein, extant studies (i.e., Hosseini, 2011; Kadhim et al., 2016; Kannan, 2009; Salman et al., 2017; Sarker et al., 2012). Based on the pervious scholars, the following hypothesis is assumed.

**Hypothesis 6.** *Process is positively related to customer satisfaction.*

#### *Physical evidence and customer satisfaction*

Physical Evidence is where the service is being delivered from. It is particularly relevant to retailers operating outside clinics. This element of the marketing mix will distinguish a company from its competitors. Physical evidence can be used to charge a premium price for a service and establish a positive experi- ence. For example, if you walk into a destination, you expect a clean and friendly environment. If the place is smelly or dirty, customers are likely to walk out, even before they have received the service. Moreover, Sreenivas et al. (2013) explained that the physical evidence includes admission office, signs, customer care room, medical equipment, recovery room, building exterior, employee uniforms, reports and stationary, billing statements, website, etc. Physical evidence of hospital can be witnessed through entrance, lobby area, parking area, waiting area, public toilet facilities, signage system, gift, book and florist's shops, coffee shop-cum-snack bar, interior decoration, lighting and ventilation, uninterrupted power supply, drinking water facilities, sewerage, telephone and communication facilities, transportation facilities, security, and display of awards and certificates won by doctors and hospital, etc.

Superficially, Sarker et al. (2012) pointed out that physical evidence is fundamentally focused on the travel experience, accommodation, transporta- tion, and luxury. Furthermore, it is a very important factor for the travel and tourism industry (Almuhrzi & Alsawafi, 2017). According to Kadhim et al. (2016), refers as the scope to which a travel agencies involved in building tourists or travelers and customer kindly or friendly, staff members, safety, security, and green atmosphere in their destination. At the same time, Egyptian travel agencies need to achieve physical evidence prudently, because it can affect deeply on tourist's impressions (Magatef, 2015). It also helps in the putting of the brand and for aiming the right kind of tourists (Khasawneh & Mustafa, 2019). Physical evidence in use is the tourism and travel industry. Airlines offer first-class travel as well as economy or family classes. Similarly,

hotels are known to be 4 stars, 5 stars. All such difference is because of the use of physical evidence in tourism marketing. Previous studies (i.e., Arizal et al., 2018; Kadhim et al., 2016; Sarker et al., 2012) found that there is a significant positive relationship between physical evidence and satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is articulated

**Hypothesis 7.** *Physical evidence is positively related to customer satisfaction.*

#### *Customer satisfaction, purchase intentions, loyalty, and company profitability*

Seemingly, tourist satisfaction has a long-term financial influence on the tourism and hospitality sector (Odunlami et al., 2013). In another study, Bai et al. (2008) defined as customer satisfaction a collective outcome of opinion and tourist's evaluations of a service to meet desires, needs, requests, and hopes. In the same line, Liu and Yen (2010) viewed that customer satisfaction as how tourists can get additional benefits their cost and interaction experiences. Customer purchase intentions are reflected as an vital result factor and is clear as tourist's desire and intention to contribute based on their evaluation of service, product (i.e., Hsu et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2015). The affiliation between satisfaction and intentions in hospitality and tourism industry including hotels, restaurants, resorts, tours, trips, historical sites, cruise ships, etc. (Ali et al., 2016; Ryu et al., 2012). In the same vein, extant studies (i.e., Ali, 2016; Ali et al., 2016; Bai et al., 2008; Odunlami et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015) investigate that there is a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer purchase intentions.

On the other hand, customer satisfaction proved to be a vital determinant of long-term loyalty (Sudari et al., 2019). According to Othman et al. (2019) customer loyalty plays vital role in hospitality and tourism sector because it supports travel agencies develop their process or plans to provide excellent services and products for their tourists. In tourism context, when tourists satisfied a travel service provider, then it is more likely to predict their loyalty outcomes. However, also to inform their friends and family about this positive relation (Quang, 2017). In addition, previous studies (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Nuseir & Madanat, 2015; Othman et al., 2019; Sudari et al., 2019; Wongsawat & Deebhijarn, 2019) found that there is a significant positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, Wongsawat and Deebhijarn (2019) found that there is a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty.

On the contrary, service providers in tourism business strive for tourist satisfaction because of its influence on their revenues (Ryu et al., 2012). When this occurs, the profitability of a company would rise (Almohaimmeed, 2019).

Another note to the same effect, satisfaction creates more future sales, increases revenues/profitability decreases price elasticity, and increases the trustworthiness of the company Dacko (2004). Previous scholars (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Odunlami et al., 2013; Yee et al., 2008) found that there is a significant positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and company profitability. Therefore, the following hypotheses are assumed.

**Hypothesis 8.** *Customer satisfaction is positively affected consumer purchase intentions.*

**Hypothesis 9.** *Customer satisfaction is positively affected customer loyalty.*

**Hypothesis 10.** *Customer satisfaction has a significant impact on company profitability.*

#### *Customer loyalty, consumer purchase intentions, and company profitability*

Apparently, customer satisfaction increases tourist loyalty and impacts tourist's future repurchase intentions (Odunlami et al. (2013). In this regard, customer loyalty is positively related to consumer purchase intentions, whereas purchase intention denotes behavioral intention to purchase products or services (Hong & Cho, 2011). In the same line, tourism companies striving to meet the tourists needs, desires and requests to increase the loyalty of the tourists can in



the long term expect a positive effect on the company's profit- ability (Helgesen, 2006). Previous studies (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Odunlami et al., 2013; Othman et al., 2019) found that there is a significant positive relationship between loyalty and consumer purchase intentions.

Previous scholars reported that customer loyalty is one of the most important customer metrics in marketing due to the profit impact of maintaining a loyalty customer base (Oliver, 1999). Customer loyalty leads to company profitability because customer loyalty positively influences firm product- marketplace performance (Anderson, 2004) and financial situation (Gupta and Zeithaml, 2006) and creates shareholder wealth. The literature explains this positive loyalty-firm profitability link for several reasons. First of all, according to Kim and Bae (2010), loyalty reduces customer procurement cost, which in turn, reduces company expenses.

Furthermore, customer loyalty can indicate customer retention, the most important customer metric for company profitability because loyalty measures customer intention to repurchase a product or service. Top management has begun to realize that not only tangible assets, such as plant and equipment, raw material and finish products but also intangible assets such as brands, customer channel and partner relationship (Kim and Bae, 2010).

Marketing academics and practitioners have examined linkages between customer loyalty and firm financial performance (Rust, Lemon and Zeithaml 2004). Especially, studies demonstrated a strong and positive link between customer loyalty and firm profitability (Ittner and Larcker 1998; Anderson 2004). Various studies (Gupta, Lehmann, and Stuart 2004; Thomas and Kumar 2004) demonstrated that customer retention instead of customer acquisition or cross-selling is the key driver of customer lifetime value, hence firm financial profitability and customer acquisition is the key drive in a rapidly growing market such as China. Customer loyalty is likely to be the key driver of firm financial performance and firm value but the linkage between loyalty and firm profitability depends on the industries or categories in which a firm operates (Kim and Bae, 2010).

Concurrently, customer loyalty positively contributes to company profit- ability (Almohaimmeed, 2019). Nevertheless, profitability encompasses socio- economic elements and firm capabilities (Dubihlela & Molise-Khosa, 2014), to adapt to the changing nature of tourism business environment and rules of competition to enhance profitability (Adeniji et al., 2015). In addition to that, justify travel agencies efforts to gain by numerous variables: increased number of tourists, improved quality of service/products, and increased profitability (Almohaimmeed, 2019). Previous studies (Adeniji et al., 2015; Almohaimmeed, 2019; Hallowell, 1996; Helgesen, 2006) found that there is a significant positive relationship between loyalty and profitability. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed.

**Hypothesis 11.** *Customer loyalty is significantly influencing consumer purchase intentions.*

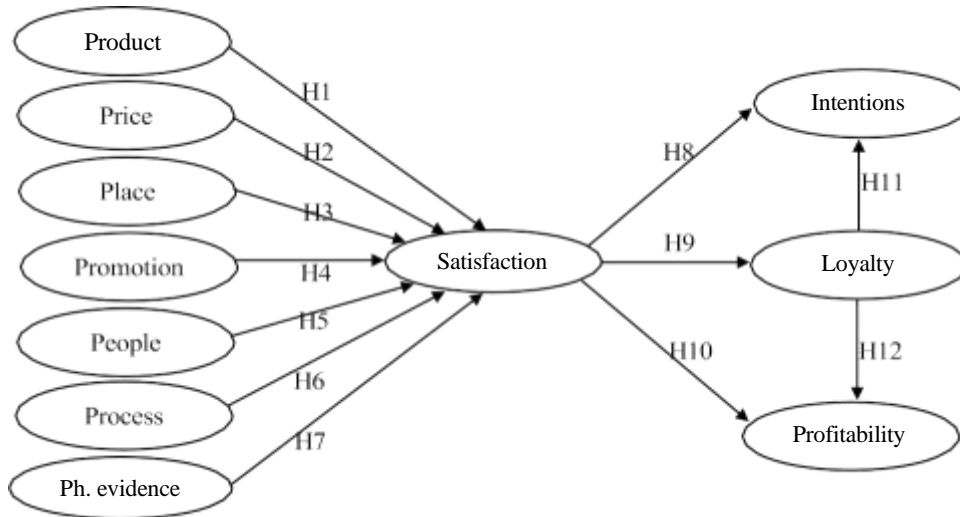
**Hypothesis 12.** *Customer loyalty has a significant impact on company profitability.*

Based on the above, the hypothesized research model of this study is shown in Figure 1

## Methodology

### *Participants and procedures*

In this study, the researcher focused on Egyptian travel agencies due to the numerous managers and hourly workers employed. These agencies also aim to provide excellent service; invest in people and play the most important role in tourism sector. These travel agencies play a significant and crucial role in the entire process of developing and promoting tourism in the country or



**Figure 1.** The hypothesized research model.

a destination, which packages and processes all the attractions, accesses, amenities, and ancillary services of a country and present them to tourists and typically known as “image builder.”

Egypt has a total of 2280 travel agencies, only 500 travel agencies (Category A) located in Cairo city (Egyptian Travel Agencies Associations, 2015). A simple random sample was used for the participants as the population is homogeneous, with each individual having the same probability of being selected. A sample of 100 individuals with a percentage of 20% is acceptable (Gay & Diehl, 1992).

The researchers contacted the marketing managers from 100 companies, only 50 managers accepted to cooperate for the scientific research purposes. Therefore, these travel agencies were used to capture the variability for interpreting the results and providing more external validity to the results. The study incorporated the top managers, which can appropriately represent all job classifications and characteristics of the target population’s organizational roles for research purposes.

Moreover, Cairo was chosen as it is the most civilized downtown area with the largest number of travel agencies and particularly category A. In terms of tourism, this city hosts several Egyptian tourist attractions. The questionnaire was designed using a google form and sent by managers to tourists.

Regarding the tourists sample, a convenience sampling technique is used. This method adopted by the researcher where collecting field research data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. It is the most commonly used sampling technique as it is incredibly prompt, uncomplicated, and economical. It is suitable for exploratory researches that need to quickly obtain information. Therefore, a total of 300 tourists’ surveys were retrieved and only 250 surveys were valid for the analysis.

### Measures

The survey instrument was designed based on the literature. This instrument was tested with a pilot sample of 50 tourists. No changes were made to the instrument because the respondents did not have any difficulty in understanding the items of the pilot test. The survey consisted of two parts. The first incorporated demographic information (gender, age, marital status, and education level). The second part consisted of 11 categories: Each category in turn included sub-items to measure the tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty. The data were collected within three months from December to March 2021.

In order to measure the research factors, the present analysis employs a deductive approach with a quantitative approach. Based on literature review and hypotheses development, the questionnaire items were adapted to explore the research constructs. Product is measured by three items adopted from previous studies (Kadhim et al., 2016; Quang, 2017; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukamto & Lumintan, 2015), price construct is measured by two items (Abd Wahab et al., 2016; Kadhim et al., 2016; Quang, 2017), place is measured by three items (Lahouel Samia & Saliha, 2014; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukamto & Lumintan, 2015), promotion is measured by four items (Arizal et al., 2018; Verma & Singh,

2017), people is measured by four items (Arizal et al., 2018; Kadhim et al., 2016; Verma & Singh, 2017), process is measured by four items (Hosseini, 2011; Kadhim et al., 2016; Kannan, 2009; Salman et al., 2017; Sarker et al., 2012), physical evidence is measured by four items (Khasawneh & Mustafa, 2019). Furthermore, customer satisfaction is measured by four items (Ali, 2016; Ali et al., 2016; Bai et al., 2008; Odunlami et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015), consumer purchase intentions is measured by four items (Ali, 2016; Almohaimmeed, 2019), customer loyalty is measured by four items (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Nuseir & Madanat, 2015; Othman et al., 2019; Sudari et al., 2019; Wongsawat & Deebhijarn, 2019), and profitability dimension is measured by four items (Almohaimmeed, 2019; Odunlami et al., 2013; Yee et al., 2008).

The final form included 40 questions that measured 11 variables using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). In previous studies, Spector (1987) and Spector and O'Connell (1994) specifically developed measures with the strongest reliability and validity at the time, based on which this study's instrument was designed.

Internal reliability was assessed by calculating "Cronbach's alpha." A value of 0.82 was obtained, which is considered an acceptable level of internal reliability. The coefficient of stability of the instrument was calculated using the "Spearman correlation coefficient" formula. The items showed positive correlations ( $r \geq 0.85$ ), indicating the reliability of the instrument. These

results indicated a high correlation between the factors and the variables as well as acceptable convergent and discriminant validity (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2006).

### *Statistical analyses*

The data were collected and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS/version 23) software. PLS approach has been used in order to analyze the relationships simultaneously, provide less contradictory results than regression analysis in terms of detecting mediation effect, lower sample size requirements, easier testing of moderating relationships, the study includes many constructs, indicators and model relationships, and the small population restrict the sample size (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle, 2019). Moreover, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used in this analysis. For data analysis, WarpPLS version (7) is used. The measurement model is evaluated via the model fit indices stated by Kock (2020). Build validity, which includes convergent and discriminant validity, ensures the measurement model's validity. When the average variance extracted (AVE) value of  $\geq 0.05$ , convergent validity is present (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity is apparent as the square root of AVEs crosses similarities between constructs. Internal accuracy (Cronbach's alpha) and composite stability are used to assess the calculation model's reliability (Peterson et al., 2020).

Additionally, Since, the study depicted constructs as well as the adapted model assumed that the flow of causality is from construct to the indicators. Therefore, the reflective type of measurement scale was used (Hanafiah, 2020). The specific measures include the composite reliability (as a means to assess the internal consistency reliability), convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The criteria for reflective measurement models cannot be universally applied to formative measurement models.

## **Findings and discussions**

### *Demographic profile of respondents*

Table 1 indicates the individual characteristics of the participants. The findings obtained are for the purpose of the research. According to the demographic profile of participants, as shown in Table 1, 52.7% of tourists were male, 47.3% were female, 71% were between the ages of 18 and 35, 26.7% were between the years of 36 and 50, and 2.3% were over the age of 50. In terms of education, 85.4% had a bachelor's degree, 9.6% had a high-school diploma, and 5% had a postgraduate degree. 45% of trips were for entertainment, 30% were for Umrah and Hajj, 20.7% were for cruises, and 9.3% were for Eco-tourism.



**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of the research model constructs.

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Product	3.847	.697
Price	3.926	.718
Place	3.944	.695
Promotion	3.746	.767
People	3.852	.848
Process	3.739	.743
Physical Evidence	3.827	.874
Satisfaction	3.800	.855
Loyalty	3.900	.791
Intention	3.887	.715
Company	3.662	.723
Profitability		

Notably, respondents strongly agreed with the study model's constructs. The respondents had a positive opinion regarding product (mean = 3.847), price (mean = 3.926), place (mean = 3.944), promotion (mean = 3.746), people (mean = 3.852), process (mean = 3.739), physical evidence (mean = 3.827), satisfaction (mean = 3.800), customer loyalty (mean = 3.900), consumer purchase intentions (mean = 3.887), and company profitability (mean = 3.662).

### *Hypotheses testing*

#### *Measurement*

#### *model*

The model fit indices showed a good model fit when the calculation model was run.  $APC = 0.301$ ,  $P > .00$ ,  $ARS = 0.672$ ,  $P > .001$ ,  $AARS = 0.670$ ,  $P > .001$ ,  $AVIF = 2.274$ ,  $AFVIF = 3.361$ ,  $GoF = 0.653$ ,  $SPR = 1.000$ ,  $RSCR = 1.000$ ,  $SSR = 1.000$ , and  $NLBCDR = 1.000$ . Table 2 indicates that convergent validity occurs for all constructs of AVEs  $< 0.50$ , and discriminant validity exists where square root of AVE approaches the similarity between constructs. Furthermore, where Cronbach's alpha and composite stability reach 0.70, the model is accurate. As a result, the calculation model used in this analysis is both accurate and trustworthy.

#### *Structural model*

The structural model explains the causal interactions that exist between constructs. Testing the 12 hypotheses of the research, and also can show the level of the impact itself whether it is significant or not. As displayed in Figure 2, the product is significantly affecting the customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H1$  is supported). Furthermore, price is significantly influence customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H2$  is supported). For the place dimension has a significant impact on satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H3$  is supported). Promotion is significantly and positively affecting the customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < .05$ , and  $H4$  is supported). Furthermore, people is significantly and positively influence satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H5$  is supported).

**Table 2.** Measurement model statistics.

Constructs	Indicators	Loading	AVE	CA	CR	VIF	P <sup>2</sup>
Product	There is diversity in the food and beverage offered.	0.690	0.581	0.737	0.806	3.148	0.762
	Attractive museums lack many services that tourists may need.	0.811					
	I enjoyed the entertainment place and historical monuments.	0.781					
Price	Price reflect the quality provided and programs	0.796	0.63	0.72	0.77	1.80	0.796
	rate commensurate with my financial capabilities	0.796					
	Price of services offered at tourist are affordable and rewarding offers are available on tourist trips.	0.759	0.58	0.75	0.81	2.21	0.767
Place	Reservation system at travel agency easy and convenient.	0.753	8	0	1	9	
	Transport used meet tourists needs comfortable.	0.788					
	Guidance material provided for tourists by travel agency is sufficient.	0.753					
Promotion	Tourist information provided by travel agency is easily accessed.	0.783	0.57	0.74	0.84	2.14	0.760
	Tourist information provides by social media.	0.845	8	4	1	4	
	Tourist information is available in different languages.	0.510					
People	There is diversity in the seasonal promotion, understanding tourist needs.	0.852					
	There is enough staff to provide services to tourists.	0.868	0.72	0.87	0.91	4.55	0.854
	People reflect the service provided.	0.843	9	6	5	4	
Process	People reflect welcoming the tourist with a smiling face, politeness and friendliness	0.846					
	People reflect understanding tourist's problems. The time used in delivering the services to tourists is satisfactory.	0.857	0.714	0.60	0.77	0.85	3.61
	Investigating and resolving tourists problems during shopping.	0.714	6	9	9	8	0.778
	Considering the importance of shoppers time.	0.871					
	Categorizing the products based on	0.820					
		0.694					

members convenience.

Physical	The setting of travel agency is suitable.	0.772	0.68	0.84	0.89	3.26	0.828
			6	7	7	2	
Evidence	Calm and enjoyable ambiance of the trip.	0.837					
	Proper amenities like accommodation, transportation, and comfort.	0.839					
		0.862					
Customer	There is diversity in the service environment.	0.850	0.73	0.87	0.91	4.77	0.856
	The services and products offered by this travel		3	8	6	5	
satisfaction	agency meet to needs, desires and	0.855					
	motivation's.	0.831					
	I am satisfied with the performance of the staff.	0.888					
	I am satisfied with the overall service quality offered by the travel agency.						
Customer	I am satisfied with the overall services range offered by the travel agency.	0.879	0.70	0.85	0.90	4.03	0.838
	I say positive things about the travel agency to		3	9	4	0	
loyalty	other people.	0.827					
	I would post positive messages about the travel	0.841					
	agency on some social media.	0.805					
	I would encourage friends and relatives to use the travel agency.						
	I would recommend the travel agency to those who seek my advice about such matters.						

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Constructs	Indicators	Loading	AVE	CA	p	VIF
	CR	VIF			AVE	
Consumer	I plan to continue my relationship with travel	0.698	0.583	0.760	0.848	3.594
		0.764				
purchase	agency in future.	0.819				
intention	I would encourage friends and colleagues	0.795				
	to go					
	and purchase products travel agency.	0.737				
Given the chance, I predict that I should use travel agencies website.						
Overall, I trust the travel suggestions and quality travel products and services offered by this agency.						
Company	The cost of vacation is very acceptable.	0.821	0.565	0.739	0.837	3.832
		0.752				
Profitability	Product value for the price paid.	0.803				
	I will go on using the same travel	0.605				
	agency.					
	I consider my travel agency as my first	0.761				
	choice.					

AVE: average variance extracted; CA: Cronbach's alpha; CR: composite reliability; VIF: variance inflation factor

Process has a significant impact on customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H6$  is supported). In addition, physical evidence positively influences the customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H7$  is supported).

Service marketing mix (7Ps) variables (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) explain 86% of the variance in customer satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.86$ ). These findings mean that the service marketing mix (7Ps) activities in his travel plans and arrangements in addition to recommendations of trusted tourists to use specific travel agencies increase their satisfaction with the travel agency.

Additionally, satisfaction has a significant influence on intentions ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H8$  is supported). It explains 70% of the variance in consumer purchase intentions ( $R^2 = 0.70$ ). Customer satisfaction is significantly positively and affecting customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.66$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $H9$  is supported). It explains

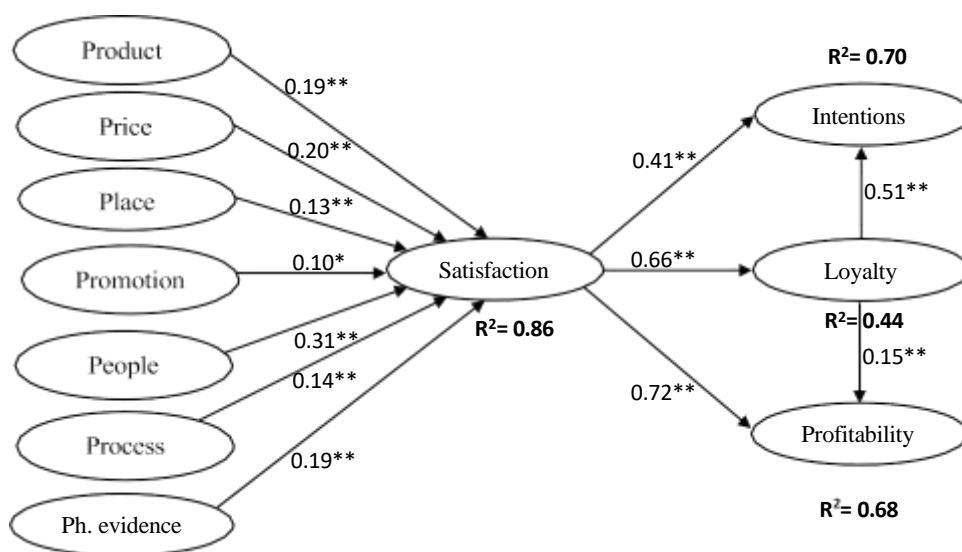


Figure 2. The structural model.

**Table 3.** Testing the hypotheses.

No.	Hypotheses	t-values	p-values	Result
H1	Product – Satisfaction	3.471	0.19**	Supported
H2	Price – Satisfaction	3.512	0.20**	Supported
H3	Place – Satisfaction	2.343	0.13**	Supported
H4	Promotion – Satisfaction	1.700	0.10*	Supported
H5	People – Satisfaction	5.707	0.31**	Supported
H6	Process – Satisfaction	2.430	0.14**	Supported
H7	Physical Evidence – Satisfaction	2.430	0.19**	Supported
H8	Satisfaction – Intention	7.655	0.41**	Supported
H9	Satisfaction – Loyalty	12.696	0.66**	Supported
H10	Satisfaction – Profitability	13.887	0.72**	Supported
H11	Loyalty – Intention	9.577	0.51**	Supported
H12	Profitability – Loyalty	2.743	0.15**	Supported

Notes: \* Significant at 5%, \*\* significant at 1%

44% of the variance in customer loyalty ( $R^2 = 0.44$ ). Furthermore, customer satisfaction has a significant impact on profitability ( $\beta = 0.72$ ,  $p < .01$ , and H10 is supported). It explains 68% of the variance in profitability ( $R^2 = 0.68$ ).

These findings imply that when tourists are satisfied with provided service, they will purchase intentions, loyal and increase profitability to the company, and perceived the received service as of significant value for them and it worth their money, time, and efforts.

On the other hand, loyalty has a significant influence on consumer purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.51$ ,  $p < .01$ , and H11 is supported). It explains 70% of the variance in consumer purchase intentions ( $R^2 = 0.70$ ). Customer loyalty is positively influencing the profitability ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < .01$ , and H12 is supported). It explains 68% of the variance in profitability ( $R^2 = 0.68$ ). Furthermore, customer satisfaction is acting as a partial mediator between 7Ps and consumer purchase intentions, loyalty, and profitability. The indirect relationships depict that 7Ps contribute to company's efforts to build loyal customer base. However, this relationship will be stronger if it increases satisfaction and loyalty. Table 3 summarizes the hypothesis testing.

By applying PLS-SEM, as well as blindfolding procedures recommended by (Chin, 1998). This study predicts the model's relevance (Q2). Values greater than zero or near to 1 show that the study model is relevant, exhibiting the power of interrelationships (Geisser, 1975). Q2 values presented in (Table 4) show that satisfaction, loyalty, intention, and profitability were 0.731, 0.437, 0.706, and 0.684, respectively, all greater than zero, demonstrating the significant connections between exogenous constructs and estimating that the study's core problem was empirically relevant.

**Table 4.** Results of the predictive relevance of the research model.

Variables	Stone-Geisser (Q2)
Satisfaction	0.731
Loyalty	0.437
Intention	0.706
Profitability	0.684

## Conclusion and implications

The current study differs from others, in a way that it examines the direct and indirect impacts of services marketing mix 7Ps on customer satisfaction through the mediating role of customer satisfaction to help understanding predictors of tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. Consequently, it highlights the changes that occur in the international global market in order to deeply understand consumer needs, desires, and motivations for tourists. It emphasizes the social interaction between tourism companies and tourists to design programs creative tourist plan and maximizes its satisfaction and loyalty. The respondents of the study positively perceive product as one important predictor of



customer satisfaction and loyalty with travel agencies. For this reason, travel agencies focus on how to satisfy tourists and the product must be correctly improved and adapted to meet the needs and wants of the tourists.

Based on the results of this study, all factors of services marketing mix have positively and effecting customer satisfaction. For the direct impact, all 7Ps have positive effects on tourist satisfaction. This finding is similar to what has been stated in previous studies (Abd Wahab et al., 2016; Arizal et al., 2018; Hosseini, 2011; Kadhim et al., 2016; Kannan, 2009; Quang, 2017; Salman et al.,

2017; Sarker et al., 2012; Sudari et al., 2019; Sukanto & Lumintan, 2015; Verma & Singh, 2017).

It's worth mentioning that, price and place scored the highest mean among the 7Ps as perceived by tourists. So, price gives a product or service a perceived value in the eyes of the consumer price. Therefore, marketers need to offer a competitive package budget for the trips, design good marketing campaigns to make the price seem more attractive in order to costume the current economic status in Egypt. As for place, marketers need to create new techno- logical promotional means for endorsing tourist places and attractions in Egypt such as virtual tours. In order to gain more tourist credibility, this could have led to the emergence of travel live streaming, where content creators use live streaming to broadcast their tourism activities, capture destination landscapes, and interact with others in real time.

Whereas the study revealed the importance of the physical evidence, which is in consistent with the study of (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007), There is an urgent need for travel agencies managers to carefully focus on the calmness and enjoyable trip ambience, the travel agency setting, such as: the appearance of buildings, landscaping, vehicles, interior furnishing, equipment, staff members, uniforms, signs, printed materials, and other visible cues all provide tangible evidence of a company's service quality, because it can have a profound impact on customer's satisfaction.

Based on the study findings, satisfaction also influences on consumer purchase intention, customer loyalty, and company profitability. This finding is consistent with previous research, such as (Almohaimmed, 2019; Nuseir &

Madanat, 2015; Odunlami et al., 2013; Othman et al., 2019; Sudari et al., 2019; Wongsawat & Deebhijarn, 2019; Yee et al., 2008). For the indirect effect, all marketing mix factors have preserved positive impacts on consumer purchase intention, customer loyalty, and company profitability. Consequently, it is of an utmost significance for travel agencies to guarantee their profitability through customer loyalty and putting it at the forefront of their plans. With huge cost savings, an increase in company loyalty and word-of-mouth recom- mendations, creating a robust customer retention strategy can really help business to survive and thrive in the current climate.

Apparently, this study is the first to investigate the impact of service market- ing mix and tourists' satisfaction and loyalty in the Egyptian travel agencies. On one aspect, the study revealed that tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between all factors of services marketing mix (7Ps) and their loyalty. On the other aspect, tourist satisfaction has a positive effect on their purchase intention, loyalty, and company profitability. In addition, both tourist purchase intention and company profitability acted as partial media- tors between tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

The contribution of this study is a two-fold: involvement to theory and practice. In terms of theoretical implication of the current research to the literature of services marketing mix in tourism, the present study revealed valid, reliable, and rigorous integrated model that includes a set of factors that significantly affecting tourist satisfaction and loyalty. It adds to the area of tourism marketing context.

Moreover, the study displayed a model that measures both direct and indirect relationships between services marketing mix and tourist loyalty through tourist satisfaction.

In connection with the practical implications based on the study's find- ings, there are some practical implications for travel agencies managers and tourism marketers and practitioners in Egypt. This could help providing a foundation to policymaker's, marketing practitioners, and planners to reexamine how they can help tourists' strategy, rules, procedures, and unique experiences.

One of these implications is to make a good use of the digital transformation trend for promoting the place as being one of the most important 7Ps, in a way of creating new marketing means and new virtual offerings. This can make a big difference in the years to come. Hoteliers also could utilize innovative 3D technology to create a virtual experience highlighting the competitive advan- tage and creating demand once meetings and events pick back up again.

For more tourist credibility, this could have led to the emergence of place live streaming, where content creators use live streaming to broadcast their tourism activities, capture destination landscapes, and interact with others in real time.

Another implication for managers, is that they need to carefully focus on the calmness and enjoyable trip ambience, the travel agency setting, such as: the appearance of buildings, landscaping, vehicles, interior furnishing, equipment, staff members, uniforms, signs, printed materials, and other visible cues all provide tangible evidence of a company's service quality, because it can have a profound impact on customer's satisfaction.

It is worth noting, the more loyal tourists though the services provided by travel agencies, the more purchase intention will be generated. Correspondingly, a core message stemming from the results is that the greater company's profitability is generated from the different services provided to tourists. Thus, it is extremely important for policymaker's, marketing practitioners, and planners, to have a sound understanding about the creation of different services, competitive prices, creative tourism programs, comfort transportation, easy reservation system, attractive museum and entertainments, verities of food and beverage, etc.

It also revealed that customer satisfaction could be maximized by their engagement in their travel arrangements. Despite being a voluntary process of tourists to collaborate and marketing mix in their travel arrangements, travel agencies support will lead to significant customer satisfaction and loyalty. As long as, service marketing mix is indirectly influencing consumer purchase intentions and profitability, the service providers need to invest in services marketing mix strategies; in order to support and engage tourists. Consequently, customer loyalty leads to significant consumer purchase intention and company profitability.

Based on the study findings, tourist loyalty has a positive effect on travel agency's profitability. In addition, the level of loyalty among tourists affected the products and services quality offered. Therefore, when tourist's loyalty increases, profitability will increase. Seemingly, customer loyalty is crucial for tourism businesses. As new customers can cost hundreds, if not thousands, more to acquire than successfully retaining a previous customer, so creating customer loyalty is important for businesses across tourism sector. Some customer loyalty strategies for Egyptian travel agencies could be suggested, such as: personalizing the tourist experience (through creating cost-effective options for trip personalization, this can create unique experiences for tourists, and encourage them to retain), the use of technology (by prioritizing the mobile experience and tourist support technologies, you can not only improve the booking experience, providing real-time, 24/7 accessible support and answers to their queries and creating different loyalty schemes.

Moreover, the study recommends activating the role of the 7Ps on customer loyalty through decision – makers, industry practitioners and marketing managers for the reason of its positive impact on repurchasing and increasing the profitability of the travel agencies.

A final implication for Egyptian travel agencies; is to guarantee their profitability through customer loyalty and putting it at the forefront of their plans. With huge cost savings, an increase in company loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations, creating a robust customer retention strategy can really help business to survive and thrive in the current climate.

### **Limitations and further research**

The present study revealed the correlation among service marketing mix activities and tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Other dimensions that encourage service marketing mix strategies should be considered in future research. The other benefits of marketing mix for both tourists and travel agencies performance should be investigated. This study was conducted in category

(A) travel agencies in Cairo city. Therefore, this study also opens up avenues for future research, such further research on other categories (B or C) to measure their customer satisfaction, and other types of tourism enterprises (airline companies, catering services, and other providers), which will be beneficial to the concerned organizations. In addition, it will provide opportunities to determine the generalizability of studies as well as conduct comparison studies. This will keep top managers up-to-date with the current trends. As this study focused on Cairo city, as it has the largest number of travel agencies, future research can also focus on also the employees in different travel agencies categories in different cities all over Egypt.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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