MARKETING Mix as Influencers of Academe Brand LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly competitive educational landscape, understanding what drives student loyalty is essential to sustaining institutional growth. This study explored how selected components of the marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion—influenced academe brand loyalty among higher education students. The study utilized a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive-correlational method. The correlational aspect examined the relationship between the independent variables product, price, place, and promotion, and the dependent variables, which encompassed the different dimensions of brand loyalty (cognitive, affective, and behavioral). This research design enabled the study to examine the interplay between the marketing strategies of academic institutions and their students' brand loyalty. A total of 300 higher education students participated in the study. The respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling approach to ensure representation across various academic programs. Based on the data gathered, the study applied quantitative methods to determine the strength and nature of these relationships. Results indicated that all four elements of the marketing mix were positively associated with brand loyalty. These findings reinforced the relevance of the Marketing Mix Model and Relationship Marketing Theory in educational settings, offering valuable insights for academic institutions aiming to strengthen their branding strategies and student engagement initiatives.

KEYWORDS: *Business Management, marketing mix, brand loyalty, higher education, product.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of brand loyalty has gained significant attention in higher education, as institutions seek to cultivate a strong, enduring connection with students, faculty, and broader stakeholder communities. In this context, the marketing mix, often referred to as the 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion), has emerged as a crucial factor in shaping an academic institution's brand perception and loyalty. According to Nurfitriansyah et al. (2021), the marketing mix plays a significant role in shaping prospective students' decision-making when choosing a higher education institution. Furthermore, according to Hayuningtyas (2020), the four key components of the marketing mix—product, price, promotion, and place—are essential not only for attracting and retaining students but also for fostering their loyalty to the institution.

As Cooke (2015) noted, the challenge of building and maintaining brand loyalty in the academe is multifaceted. This complexity arises from factors such as growing competition among higher education institutions, rising tuition costs, and shifting preferences among prospective students, underscoring the need for a more strategic marketing approach in the higher education sector.

The importance of brand loyalty in the academe extends beyond the immediate benefits to the institution. A strong and loyal brand can contribute to the broader social and economic value of higher education by attracting and retaining talented students and faculty, fostering research and innovation, and strengthening the institution's reputation within the community.

As highlighted by Brkanlić et al. (2020), there is a notable connection between the marketing mix and academic brand loyalty, including student satisfaction. Improving the various elements of the marketing mix can increase student satisfaction and loyalty, positively influence their decision-making, and shape their perceptions of the quality of marketing initiatives, their expectations, and the institution's public image. As emphasized by Nuseir and Madanat (2015), the four components of the marketing mix—product, price, promotion, and place—play a crucial role in attracting and retaining students while also fostering loyalty to the institution. The results of these studies indicate that the marketing mix variables, including product, price, promotion, and place, have a positive and significant effect on customer (student) satisfaction, and customer (student) satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on customer (student) loyalty. In essence, the marketing mix has emerged as a critical factor in shaping academic institutions' brand loyalty, with far-reaching implications for their success and the broader social value they can deliver.

While the existing literature has provided valuable insights into the relationship between the marketing mix and brand loyalty in the academe, there are still avenues for further exploration. One potential area of research could be the examination of how different segments of the academic community (e.g., students, faculty, staff, alumni) respond to and perceive the various components of the marketing mix, and how these perceptions translate into brand loyalty. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track the evolution of brand loyalty over time and its relationship with the marketing mix could yield important insights into the long-term sustainability of academic brand strategies.

This research serves as an initial exploration of how marketing strategies influence brand loyalty in the academe. While numerous studies have examined student satisfaction and marketing effectiveness in higher education, there remains a limited understanding of how specific marketing components directly affect behavioral and cognitive brand loyalty among students. The researcher has yet to encounter a localized study that examines these variables within higher education institutions in Davao City and the Mindanao region, which is why this study was undertaken. Thus, this study aims to determine the status of academe brand loyalty among students in terms of affective, behavioral, and cognitive loyalty, as well as assess the implementation of the marketing mix—specifically the product, people, price, place, and promotion components—as rated by students in a selected higher education institution. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine the significant relationship between the marketing mix and academic brand loyalty and to identify which specific components of the marketing mix serve as significant predictors of student loyalty. Ultimately, this research seeks to address the gap in understanding how strategic marketing practices influence brand loyalty within the academe, particularly among higher education institutions in Davao City and the Mindanao region.

METHODS

This study utilized a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive-correlational. The descriptive component aimed to provide a comprehensive narrative of the levels of marketing mix elements (product, price, place, promotion, and people) and brand loyalty (cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral) among the respondents. Through this combined descriptive and correlational approach, it further determined the extent of the marketing mix's influence on brand loyalty. Descriptive research, as highlighted by McCombes (2019), involves observing and documenting existing conditions without altering any variables. This study, it provided a detailed snapshot of current marketing practices and the level of student loyalty in the higher education setting, offering valuable context before examining deeper relationships among the variables.

The study was conducted at a selected higher education institution (HEI) in Davao City and involved 300 third- and fourth-year students, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various academic programs, thereby enhancing the reliability of the findings. An adapted survey questionnaire sourced from Al Badi (2018) and Candan et al. (2013) was used and reviewed by a panel of experts to ensure content validity. Its reliability was confirmed by Cronbach’s alphas ranging from 0.88 to 0.93, indicating high internal consistency across all variables. The instrument consisted of 29 statements divided into three parts: demographic profile, independent variables (marketing mix), and dependent variables (brand loyalty). The marketing mix was assessed using 14 items grouped under four indicators—product, price, place, and promotion—each rated on a five-point Likert scale with a corresponding interpretation matrix. Brand Loyalty, the dependent variable, was measured using 15 statements covering three key indicators: Cognitive Loyalty (4 items), Affective Loyalty (6 items), and Behavioral Loyalty (5 items), all rated on the same Likert scale and using the same interpretation matrix to ensure consistency in measurement.

The researcher followed a standard data-collection procedure, beginning with approval from the Dean of the Graduate School at the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC). Subsequently, ethical clearance was secured from the UIC Research Ethics Committee, which reviewed the study in accordance with the ten core dimensions of research ethics: social value, informed consent, vulnerability, risk-benefit ratio, privacy and confidentiality, justice, transparency, researcher qualifications, adequacy of facilities, and community involvement. Formal letters were then sent to the officials of the selected higher education institution in Davao City. During data collection, the researcher ensured that students’ class schedules and academic activities remained uninterrupted.

The online survey was administered via Google Forms and distributed through official channels, including institutional emails, student platforms, and class representatives. Participants were first presented with an informed consent form (UIC-REC Form 0057), which explained the study's purpose, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality measures, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Respondents were given adequate time to review the consent form and proceed only after confirming their agreement. To minimize fatigue, the survey was designed to be completed within 10–15 minutes, and no personally identifiable information was collected. Responses were automatically coded, securely stored in a password-protected Google Drive accessible only to the researcher and adviser, and were permanently deleted six months after completion. Data gathering spanned two weeks, after which responses were encoded, tabulated, and analyzed under the guidance of a statistician using appropriate statistical tools.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The overall mean for affective loyalty is 4.04, which is considered high and interpreted as manifested. This suggests that students exhibit a strong emotional attachment and favorable sentiment toward the institution. The high mean reflects that students genuinely feel happy, proud, and fulfilled in their academic affiliation, indicating a positive emotional connection with the institution. This alignment between the institution's values and the students' personal aspirations strengthens their affective commitment. The findings affirm the study of Iglesias et al. (2011), which emphasized that brand experience significantly shapes emotional loyalty, reinforcing long-term student-institution relationships. Similarly, Chinomona (2013) found that affective loyalty fosters consistent support and positive behavior among students. Lee and Chen (2020) also highlighted that emotional connection plays a critical role in forming brand preference in higher education, influencing students' intent to remain loyal to their chosen institution.

Behavioral loyalty shows an overall mean of 3.96, which is considered high and interpreted as manifested. This suggests that students' satisfaction with their academic experience translates into visible and consistent actions that support the institution. These behaviors include continued enrollment, active participation in academic and extracurricular programs, and positive referrals to peers. Such patterns of engagement indicate that students are not only emotionally connected but also behaviorally committed to the institution. These findings echo the study of Antikasari et al. (2021), which emphasized that behavioral loyalty is evident through repeat patronage and continuous brand engagement. In the context of higher education, Setiawan and Sayuti (2017) observed that satisfied students tend to recommend their institution and pursue further academic opportunities within it. Likewise, Wibowo et al. (2020) highlighted that quality service and relevant programs reinforce behavioral loyalty, strengthening long-term student-institution relationships.

Cognitive loyalty yielded a category mean of 3.90, which is described as high and interpreted as manifested. This level of cognitive loyalty suggests that students consistently evaluate the institution favorably and choose it over other academic options because of its perceived academic excellence, credibility, and reliability. Such rational commitment reflects students' confidence in the institution's ability to deliver quality education and meet their academic needs. These findings align with Borishade et al. (2021), who emphasized that favorable brand perceptions significantly enhance loyalty in higher education contexts. Rahi et al. (2017) also supported the role of cognitive loyalty in influencing trust and continued patronage. Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2020) affirmed that perceived academic quality and institutional reliability are critical predictors of rational student loyalty.

Table 1
Status of Brand Loyalty

Domains/Statements		Mean	SD	Description
Affective Loyalty				
1	Being a loyal student of the institution.	4.17	0.8	High
2	Feeling a sense of happiness and fulfillment being part of the institution.	4.04	0.83	High
3	Experiencing satisfaction when engaging with institutional services and programs.	3.99	0.94	High
4	Recognizing alignment between the institution and personal values and aspirations.	4	0.86	High

5	Intending to remain enrolled despite competitive alternatives from other schools	4.04	0.92	High
6	Continuing to choose the institution as the top academic preference.	4.02	0.86	High
	Category Mean	**4.04**	**0.87**	
Behavioral Loyalty				
1	Planning to pursue future academic programs at the same institution.	3.96	0.87	High
2	Encouraging others to consider enrolling in the institution.	3.94	0.98	High
3	Sharing positive experiences about the institution with others.	3.9	0.81	High
4	Showing interest in additional programs or certifications offered by the institution.	4.01	0.92	High
5	Recommending the institution to prospective students.	3.94	0.94	High
	Category Mean	**3.96**	**0.9**	**High**
Cognitive Loyalty				
1	Willingness to invest in the institution's programs despite other available options.	3.84	0.87	High
2	Preference for the institution when making academic decisions.	3.91	1.02	High
3	Belief that the institution provides superior academic quality and services.	3.89	0.97	High
4	Appreciation of the quality and features of the institution's academic offerings.	3.94	0.94	High
	Category Mean	**3.9**	**0.95**	**High**
Overall Mean		**3.97**	**0.9**	**High**

The product component of the marketing mix has an overall mean of 4.16, which is considered high and interpreted as evident. This indicates that students generally perceive the institution's academic offerings as strong, relevant, and competitive. The evident level of satisfaction with the programs suggests that students recognize the institution's commitment to providing quality education aligned with current academic and industry standards. This finding affirms the study of Basyouni (2019), which emphasized the value of regularly updating academic programs to meet evolving industry needs. Likewise, Donkor and Kyei (2020) underscored that aligning academic offerings with labor market demands enhances institutional relevance and appeal. Through continuous improvement and responsiveness to market trends, the institution not only builds student trust but also reinforces loyalty by preparing learners for real-world professional environments.

Table 2
Status of Marketing Mix

Domains/Statements		Mean	SD	Description
Product				
1	The institution is offering high-quality academic programs and services.	4.17	0.68	High
2	The institution is continuously enhancing its curriculum and academic offerings to maintain a competitive advantage. (this implies that)	4.24	0.76	Very High
3	The institution is providing a diverse range of highly sought-after programs.	4.21	0.74	Very High
4	The institution is regularly updating programs to align with industry needs.	4.02	0.73	High
Category Mean		**4.16**		
Price				
1	The institution's tuition and fees are being reasonable and competitive.	3.46	0.86	High
2	The institution is using a competitive pricing strategy.	3.53	0.87	High

3	The institution is offering scholarships and discounts to accommodate students.	3.48	1.13	High
4	The institution is offering flexible payment options to accommodate students.	3.62	0.84	High
Category Mean		**3.52**	**0.92**	**High**
Place				
1	The institution's location is being easily accessible to students.	3.76	0.95	High
2	The institution is providing clear and detailed information about its programs.	3.96	0.78	High
3	The institution is efficiently delivering academic services both online and on-campus.	3.91	0.81	High
Category Mean		**3.88**	**0.85**	**High**
Promotion				
1	The institution is providing clear and detailed information about its programs.	3.94	0.97	High
2	The institution is actively promoting through various platforms to identify its programs.	4.22	0.72	Very High
3	The institution is regularly implementing a structured promotional campaign.	4.13	0.85	High
Category Mean		**4.1**	**0.85**	**High**
Overall Mean		**3.91**	**0.84**	**High**

The price component had an overall mean of 3.52, which is considered high and interpreted as evident. This suggests that students generally view the institution's tuition and fee structures as fair, reasonable, and financially accessible. The evident perception of affordability indicates that the institution successfully balances educational quality with cost, contributing to students' overall satisfaction and continued enrollment. These findings are supported by Brkanlić et al. (2020), who highlighted that flexible payment schemes enhance students' financial comfort and support academic persistence. Alam and Khalifa (2021) further noted that equitable pricing models foster both emotional and behavioral commitment among students. In addition, Maelah et al. (2012) found that while many institutions apply competition- or demand-based pricing, those that adopt value-based strategies—where costs align with perceived quality—are more likely to foster stronger brand loyalty among learners.

The place indicator yielded a high overall mean of 3.88, interpreted as moderately evident. This suggests that students have generally positive views of the institution's accessibility and service delivery. While expectations are being met, further improvements in physical and digital infrastructure—such as campus facilities and online platforms—could enhance student satisfaction. This finding supports Shamsudin et al. (2019), who emphasized accessibility in both location and institutional resources. Tavares and Cardoso (2013) and Kusumawati (2013) likewise stressed the value of clear communication and reliable services in fostering trust, improving the student experience, and strengthening loyalty.

The promotion indicator recorded a high overall mean of 4.10, indicating it is evident. This reflects favorable student perceptions of the institution's marketing efforts and communication strategies. Students acknowledge the consistent use of various platforms to promote academic offerings and services, which reinforces institutional image and supports loyalty. Borishade et al. (2021) emphasized that a strategic promotional mix positively influences enrollment and brand recognition, while Ivy (2008) highlighted its role in shaping perceptions and delivering relevant information. Effective, targeted messaging helps position the institution as responsive and student-centered, fostering engagement and trust.

Correlation Between Variables. The analysis in Table 3 reveals a significant positive correlation between the elements of the Marketing Mix and Brand Loyalty. The results indicate strong relationships for Product ($r = .671$, $p = .001$), Price ($r = .674$, $p = .001$), Place ($r = .698$, $p = .001$), and Promotion ($r = .667$, $p = .001$), all statistically significant at the 0.001 level. These findings imply that enhancements in any marketing mix component are closely linked to increased brand loyalty among students. This underscores the critical role of a strategic marketing approach in cultivating loyalty in academic institutions.

The results affirm Rosyid's (2022) findings, which established a positive link between the marketing mix and brand loyalty. Moreover, they validate the study's assumption that a comprehensive and student-focused marketing mix significantly contributes to fostering loyalty. Surapto (2020) emphasized that institutions with robust marketing strategies are more successful at retaining students, while Tammubua (2022) noted that loyalty often leads to improved retention, favorable word of mouth, and increased referrals—factors essential for institutional growth and reputation.

Table 3

Correlation Between Variables

Marketing Mix Elements Correlated with Brand Loyalty	**r**	***p***	**Remarks**
Product	0.671	0.001	Significant
Price	0.674	0.001	Significant
Place	0.698	0.001	Significant
Promotion	0.667	0.001	Significant

Regression analysis. The regression analysis, presented in Table 4, reveals that among the marketing mix elements, Product, Price, and Promotion significantly influence Brand Loyalty. Notably, Product is the strongest predictor (β = 0.355, p = 0.001, t = 5.683), suggesting that improvements in academic offerings are strongly associated with increased student loyalty. Price also shows a significant positive effect (β = 0.280, p = 0.001, t = 5.344), indicating that when students perceive the tuition and fees as fair and reasonable, their loyalty to the institution is reinforced. Similarly, Promotion (β = 0.236, p = 0.001, t = 3.796) positively affects brand loyalty, though to a slightly lesser extent than Product and Price.

In contrast, Place (β = 0.130, p = 0.059, t = 1.893) does not show a statistically significant effect, as its p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This implies that, in this study, the institution's location or accessibility does not decisively shape students' loyalty.

Overall, the regression model is statistically significant, with an R-squared of 0.624, indicating that 62.4% of the variation in brand loyalty is explained by the combined influence of the marketing mix elements. The model's significance is further supported by an F-value of 122.293 and a p-value of 0.000, affirming that the marketing mix, particularly Product, Price, and Promotion, plays a vital role in strengthening student loyalty in the academic setting.

Table 4

Influences of Brand Loyalty

Variables	Beta	p-value	t	Remarks
Product	0.355	0.001	5.683	Significant
Price	0.28	0.001	5.344	Significant
Place	0.13	0.059	1.893	Not Significant
Promotion	0.236	0.001	3.796	Significant
r = .790 r^2 = .624 p = .000 F = 122.293				

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study's findings provided several important insights into the current state of marketing mix strategies and their influence on student brand loyalty in the academic setting. The results revealed that students exhibit a high level of brand loyalty toward the institution, characterized by strong emotional attachment, favorable behavior, and a positive view of its academic offerings. This suggests that the institution is successful at cultivating student commitment, which may lead to increased retention, positive word of mouth, and sustained engagement over time.

Furthermore, the marketing mix elements were highly rated by the respondents, reflecting students' favorable perception of the institution’s marketing strategies. Among the components, Product and Promotion received very high ratings, indicating that students strongly recognize the relevance and quality of academic programs and are highly aware of the institution's marketing communications. With this in mind, the institution is recommended to continue investing in curricular improvements to maintain academic relevance and visibility. Maintaining consistent, strategic promotional efforts across multiple channels can also enhance brand recognition and attract potential enrollees.

Regarding the relationship between marketing mix strategies and brand loyalty, the results show a significant positive correlation, suggesting that students are more likely to remain loyal when they perceive marketing efforts to be effective and aligned with their expectations. Specifically, Product, Price, and Promotion significantly influenced brand loyalty, and their combined effect explained 62.4% of the variation in student loyalty levels. This finding emphasizes the importance of ensuring value, affordability, and accessibility in academic services to reinforce student trust and commitment.

In relation to theoretical grounding, the study affirms the principles of the Relationship Marketing Theory by Morgan and Hunt (1994), which highlights trust and commitment as essential to long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. The significant influence of product, price, and promotion on brand loyalty reflects how strategic, value-centered marketing can foster deeper relationships between students and institutions. As students experience consistent academic value and support, their commitment to the institution strengthens, thereby increasing loyalty.

Given the remaining unexplained variance in brand loyalty, future studies may explore additional influencing factors, such as student satisfaction, peer influence, institutional reputation, or digital engagement, to gain a more holistic understanding of what drives student loyalty in higher education.

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