

Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction Among Dot-Accredited Hotels In Koronadal City

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ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to determine the domain of marketing mix that best influences the customer satisfaction of the Department of Tourism (DOT) -accredited hotels in Koronadal City, South Cotabato, Philippines. The study used a quantitative, non-experimental research design employing the correlational technique. The respondents of the study were 350 hotel guests who billeted at DOT- accredited hotels in the City and were selected through a random approach. An adapted and contextualized structured questionnaire was deployed to measure and establish the relationship between marketing mix and customer satisfaction. Moreover, the mean, Pearson r , and regression were used as statistical tools. Results of the study showed that the levels of the marketing mix and customer satisfaction were high. Also, the data revealed that marketing mix has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction. When regressed, it was found that observed variables of marketing mix promotion, people, process, and physical evidence statistically influence customer satisfaction. Of the four, the process domain emerged as the best influencer of customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *marketing mix, customer satisfaction, correlational technique, and DOT-accredited hotels*

I. INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The hotel industry, among many others, is experiencing higher levels of competition in today's age of liberalization and globalization. The increased presence of hotel groups in the market ensures that the level of competition is higher than those of other industries. However, difficulties are evident with regards to sustainably stabilizing one's market share. Thus, retaining regular customers and maintaining the inflow of new ones are vital for the management. Any hotel with the pursuit of retaining its market will have to constantly outperform its rivals in the long run in the field of customer satisfaction (Bhavani & Pawar, 2013). Accordingly, this entails precautions against customer dissatisfaction at all costs. This is because customer dissatisfaction may result in the loss of customers' patronage or loyalty to the hotel. Customer dissatisfaction causes damage to the reputation or image of hotels, thus, can lead to a decrease in their customer count. It is, therefore, imperative that hotels, as institutions that provide services to their markets, must prioritize customer satisfaction in response to the service they render, along with the effectiveness of their marketing mix.

Organizations and researchers have invested great attention and interest in customer satisfaction as a subject. The main pursuit of organizations is to maximize sales and minimize costs. A factor that is contributory to the increase in hotel sales is customer satisfaction since the latter leads to loyalty amongst customers, positive recommendations, and increased purchase frequency (2008 et al., 2008). Today, hoteliers in the industry are confronted with the difficulty of providing and sustaining customer satisfaction. The increase in customer standards regarding service and product quality in the tourism industry has become highly evident to professionals (Lam & Zhang, 1999; Yen & Su, 2004).

Relationships between service institutions and their guests pose as strategic assets (Gruen et al., 2000) and customer satisfaction serves as the starting point for defining business objectives. To augment service quality and satisfy guests' value perception, hotels are placing greater investment in their efforts that are seen to be contributory to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Jones et al., 2007).

The marketing mix is a collection of relevant characteristics and solutions that enable customers to fulfill (national) demands and accomplish the company's goals (Pruskus, 2015). According to Singh (2012), marketing is a complicated set of marketing mix elements utilized by businesses to sell their goods and services. Properly enforced marketing mix management allows marketers to establish a mixture of indicators that will enable the company's budget to be sensibly managed to reach the intended objectives. According to Yelkur (2000), hoteliers must recognize that the service marketing mix variables (product or service, pricing, site, physical evidence, promotion, participants, process, and productivity or quality) may help them boost customer satisfaction and retention. Adopting the theory of service marketing mix might therefore boost clients' happiness and loyalty to hotels.

This year, leading up to 2021, the Hotel and Hospitality Industry in the Philippines displays significant promise. Tourist arrivals increased by 1.2 million people, or 10.9 percent, in the first three months of 2017. (Philippine Star, 2017). The increase in tourism is expected to have an impact on the hotel businesses, especially those in Koronadal City. There are currently 46 hotels and inns in the city, 14 of which are DOT-accredited, and these hotels face the difficulty of meeting or going beyond customers' expectations to ensure their satisfaction, while also determining which marketing mix components could be determinants of customer satisfaction. As a result, herein researcher believes that this study is timely, given that hotels face intense competition in today's rapidly changing global economy. To acquire a competitive edge in Koronadal City, hotels must explore financially strategic marketing techniques such as the service marketing mix. Consequently, the emphasis of this study will be on the impact of service marketing mix on hotel customer satisfaction at the Department of Tourism (DOT) - Accredited Hotels in the City of Koronadal. Additionally, this research aims to produce strategies and insights on how to improve the satisfaction of hotel customers in terms of the seven P's of service marketing in the context of the hotel sector.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research study is to determine which domain of marketing mix best influences customer satisfaction among DOT-accredited hotels in Koronadal City. Specifically, it aims to accomplish the following sub-objectives:

1. To describe the level of Marketing Mix used by DOT accredited hotels in terms of:
 - 1.1 products;
 - 1.2 prices;
 - 1.3 promotions;
 - 1.4 places;
 - 1.5 people;
 - 1.6 physical evidence, and;
 - 1.7 processes
2. To determine the level of customer satisfaction among DOT- accredited hotels in terms of:
 - 2.1 service quality;
 - 2.2 customer expectations, and;
 - 2.3 customer loyalty
3. To determine the significance of the relationship between marketing mix and customer satisfaction
4. To identify which domain of marketing mix best influences customer satisfaction in the context of DOT- accredited hotels in the locale.

Hypotheses

The subsequent null hypotheses will be tested at a significance level of 0.05:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between marketing mix and customer satisfaction.

Ho2: There is no domain of marketing mix that best influences customer satisfaction

Review of Related Literature

This section focuses mainly on discussing the Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction. It lays down the documented literature and related studies on the identified variables. The independent and dependent variables are presented as adapted from Xin (2014) for the Marketing Mix, whereas Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Motswana and Shrimali (2013) are the proponents for Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty, respectively. The independent variable, which is the Marketing Mix, has the following components: product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence, or the 7 Ps of Marketing Mix. On the other hand, the dependent variable, which is customer satisfaction, has the following dimensions: service quality, customer expectation, and customer loyalty.

Marketing Mix

Marketing is a collection or component of processes that create impressions on customers, impact customer relations, and have implications on organizational benefits (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011). Bay, Petrizzi, and Gill (2008) affirmed that when a company uses the Marketing Mix in their business, it helps them grow organizational sales and earnings, therefore reaching their marketing goals.

Booms and Bitner (1981) expand the typical Marketing Mix for services from 4Ps to 7Ps by including three new elements: personnel, physical assets, and processes. Service marketing theorists forayed into a new realm of management theory and practice by including personnel, physical assets, and processes into the Marketing Mix, thereby creating the 7Ps (Lovelock, 2007).

Marketing mix strategies are critical to gaining shares in the market and improving business success. Although studies show that there are 7 Ps in the marketing mix of service establishments, the extended marketing mix such as people, process, and physical evidence (Wirtz and Lovelock, 2016), as well as hotel promotional strategies, are the most important components of the service marketing mix.

According to Rathod (2016), the Marketing Mix concept assists marketers in reviewing and defining important factors such as Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical evidence that impact the marketing of their physical offering (Products) and intangible performances (Service). The Service Marketing Mix, also coined as the extended marketing mix, is an important aspect of a marketing strategy that is needed for competent service delivery. It is used as a tool of marketing strategy to analyze market competitiveness. Abril, C. and Cnov, R. (2016) said that private label communication in the industry, private label dispensation intensity, and pricing perception are the most effective marketing techniques for developing private label brand ownership.

Kwok, Tang, and Yu (2020) stated that the Marketing Mix later broadened the 4 Ps model by including three more Ps, including Participants, Physical Evidence, and a more thorough and detailed Process in examining the marketing mix of a service offering. Aside from assessing the important marketing features of service offerings, the said may also be used as a general marketing system in other domains.

According to Yelkur (2000), hoteliers must recognize that the service Marketing Mix variables (product or service, pricing, site, physical evidence, promotion, participants, process, and productivity or quality) may help them boost customer satisfaction and retention. Adopting the theory of service marketing mix might therefore boost customer happiness and loyalty to hotel institutions.

Product/service is the initial sign of the marketing mix. It is described as a company's primary offering. Consumers desire value and advantages, thus hotel managers must endeavor to satisfy them. Armstrong and Kotler (2011) describe "Products" as everything physical or intangible supplied to a market for attention, usage, and consumption to meet customers' requirements and wants. According to this definition, "Products" includes services. According to Mammon (2012), among the marketing mix aspects, "Products" has a major effect on consumer

satisfaction. Using the service quality dimension, Addo and Kwarteng (2012) analyzed the factors of customer satisfaction and the degree of acceptance of services offered by private banks in Ghana.

“Price” is the second indication of the Marketing Mix. It is a significant aspect thereof. It is a monetary value assigned to a product. Price is one among many ways institutions interact with their customers. Pricing is viewed as revenue-focused since it is the sole Marketing Mix component that generates income. Essentially, a price is the sum of money indicated in a currency that a consumer exchanges for a bargain in the use of a product. Pricing is significant since it is based on the product's placement (Issakova, 2014). According to Nusseir and Madanat (2015), pricing is a crucial reason behind happiness and loyalty since a client intricately assesses if one is getting the highest value from the service for his/her money. Thus, hotel institutions may use variations in pricing strategies, taking into account their own distinct goals.

Promotion is the 3rd component of the marketing mix. Customers are being sent a convincing message regarding a specific product. In their study on the influence of Marketing Mix factors on tourist satisfaction, Mohammad et al. (2012) discovered that advertising is highly associated with customer satisfaction. The third element is promotion, which is a collection of actions undertaken to tell potential buyers about the product by highlighting its benefits for the product to be known and consumed. Advertising is a type of marketing that uses channels such as mass media, radio, television, magazines, newspapers, brochures, billboards, web pages, direct mail, and even the internet to provide immediate feedback to organizations (Marc, 2014). The core aspect of “Promotion” is to reduce the communication gap that occurs between an organization and the customer (Lovelock & Wright, 2002).

The fourth marketing mix indicator is “Place”, also known as the distribution channel (Rasmussen et al). (2007). “Place” is usually a physical or virtual store. Rasmussen et al. (2007) defined four types of Place decisions: a) retail. Retailers may have a firmer relationship with their clients if they have a large number of other brand products on hand. This might expose the buyer to a wide range of products. Retailers regularly promote and retail commodities and services; b) Wholesale. Wholesalers diminish the value of a product when compared to retail sellers. As a consequence, customers are typically glad to acquire goods from them. To push manufacturer sales, wholesalers make their brochures. They should, however, be paid a proportion of total sales revenue; c) Internet. Customers often buy items online from sites including but not limited to: eBay, Flipkart, Jabong, and Amazon. The main advantage of the internet is that less known products can reach a large market with relatively low entry barriers due to the low cost of the set-up; as a result, there is a significant change and progress in commerce and consumption through the Internet, which has resulted to a massive increase in e-commercial activities; d) Direct selling to any target market are conducted without the use of distributors or middlemen. It denotes that the marketing business has a direct promotional relationship with the client. Aqua Guard, as an example, regularly dispenses their products through retailers, but a client may register directly to them for data, which is frequently delivered digitally via email or mail; e) Peer to peer is a type of transmission in which an individual transfers the message to his colleagues and such is an extremely effective promotional approach, and; f) Multi-channel, which is highly effective to secure a market share for a variety of products and services.

The fifth marketing mix indication is people, which pertains to individuals directly associated with service provision. Their degree of interpersonal skills, training, ability in providing service, and bearing all have significant roles in client satisfaction, even in the banking business. According to Thurau (2004), customers’ orientation on company service is a crucial determinant of customer happiness. Employee-customer connection results in high levels of customer satisfaction. According to Yang and Coates (2010), staff must be competent enough to provide service to clients, which correspondingly requires knowledge and abilities pertinent to both professional and managerial contexts. Employees with certain talents will stretch the reliability of service.

“Process” is the sixth component of the Marketing Mix. Process refers to the process of providing services. People and processes cannot be bifurcate. In the process of service provision, if a service provider focuses on providing customers with high-quality service experiences, customer service satisfaction will be relatively high. Thus, the service management process is a tool for improving service provision. According to Hirankitti et al., (2009), the process is seen by the client and serves as the foundation for customer satisfaction with the transaction. As a result, the management of the process assures the availability of high-end economical hotels. Because clients are involved in the development of services, Process is more crucial in the service sector than it is in organizations that exclusively manufacture and sell physical commodities (Khan& Fasih, 2014; Hirankitti, Mechinda&Manjing, 2009). According to Friesner (2014), some firms regard Process as an outcome, such as achieving a 35% market share. There exist several stages to the sequential

system, which are the following: 1) provision of the value of the components of the marketing mix previously mentioned; 2) customer response is a vital component for marketing and the consequent progress of the organization; and 3) the process can be molded based on individual tastes, needs, and preferences. For service firms,

The process is critical. Service design strengthens an organization's brand image, resulting in value addition and improved service quality (Larsen et al., 2007). The management of waiting time for any service provider must be carefully considered to make the service swift and convenient. As a result, hotel managers must be aware of the length it takes to provide service to a customer.

Finally, the final Marketing Mix component is Physical Evidence. Physical Evidence includes the physical environment wherein the service is provided and where the firm and its clients mingle, as well as any visible objects that aid in service efficiency or communication. The Physical Evidence of service pertains to all tangible symbols of the services, such as signage, letterhead, brochures, business cards, report forms, and other practical objects for operation. In certain scenarios, the place where services are given, such as a retail bank branch, is included. Physical evidence cues offer great possibilities for the company to deliver consistent and powerful statements about the organization's goal, target market groups, and service nature (Chand, 2015). It is applied to products and produces an excellent experience. Customers will base their decisions on physical evidence. For example, when a client walks into a restaurant, they expect a welcoming and tidy environment. However, if the environmental conditions are the opposite, clients are more inclined to leave. Customers rely on exemplification to help them assess products before making a purchasing decision. That is why marketers assess Physical Evidence before implementing these exemplifications. Marketers' primary responsibility is to create and apply visible/physical evidence to attract their target market (Bhasin, 2014).

Physical evidence, which relates to the physical environment, also influences consumer satisfaction (Ali et al., 2013). Customers pick service providers based on physical elements such as colors, scenes, music, and the structure of the infrastructure (Oh et al., 2008). Furthermore, Mahmood and Khan (2014) contend that service-driven firms use physical evidence to differentiate themselves from rivals and to influence customers when picking service organizations. It was also proven that the service environment is a significant element affecting purchase decisions (Hanaysha, 2018).

Customer Satisfaction

Customer happiness is seen as an important component of the hotel industry's value proposition to customers, according to studies in the industry (Maghzi et al., 2011). It is the idea that emphasizes the need of creating value for consumers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating the competence and obligation to satisfy their needs (Dominici & Guzzo, 2010). Customer happiness is vital in determining whether hotels thrive or fail, and why hotels operate differently (Abraheem et al., 2011). Hotels that give greater levels of service appear to have higher levels of performance, which verifies a higher number of delighted clients (Amin et al., 2013). If it influences the organization's success, then it is also critical to see the link between customers' happiness and customer retention.

Giving clients what they want is a good place to start when it comes to creating customer happiness (Holjevac et al. 2009). It is the focal point of organizational endeavor and is critical to its success and survival (Bucak, 2014). Customer pleasure may be ensured by providing high-quality products or services (Gunarathne, 2014).

Service quality is the first sign of client happiness. Because of its strong relationship with customer satisfaction, service quality has been viewed as a crucial determinant of organizational success, particularly in the service sector (Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006). Service quality is seen to have a direct influence on customer happiness, repeat purchasing behavior, and the long-term viability of a company's profit (Wilkins, Meerilees & Herington, 2007). To improve service quality, it is critical to engage with staff regularly and review their service encounters (Prayuhda & Harsanto, 2014).

The SERVQUAL scale, established by Parasuraman et al., (1985), is one of the most extensively used instruments for measuring service quality in a variety of service areas, including the hotel industry (Hossain, 2012; Boonitt & Rompho, 2012; Al Khattab & Aldehayyat, 2011). This measurement assesses hotels and their quality of service based on five different areas: tangible, dependability, service responsiveness, certainty, and empathy towards clients. Many academics and actual managers in numerous sectors have widely recognized and utilized these dimensions: tangibility is the look of the hotel and hotel employees, facilities at the hotel and its rooms, and visual elements for clients. The capacity of the hotel to execute services precisely and on time is referred to as reliability. The hotel's responsiveness is defined as its eagerness and flexibility to serve and assist clients. Assurance refers to the hotel's

capacity to impose impressions of trustworthiness to clients regarding its services, and the expertise and abilities of personnel; whereas empathy refers to the hotel's attention and care for each customer.

Consumer expectations are the second indication of customer satisfaction. Principles of service delivery function as standards or benchmarks from which hotel performance is evaluated and regarded. Since clients tend to compare their impressions against these standards of performance when evaluating hotel efficiency and service, these must be regarded highly by managers and marketers to meet clients' expectations. Knowing what the consumer expects is the first and maybe most important step in providing high-quality service (Bhavani & Pawar, 2013). Personal characteristics such as gender, the purpose of stay, country, and private sphere of hospitality all impact the level of expectation on hotel hospitality (Arrifin & Maghzi, 2012).

The loyalty of customers is the third indication of satisfaction. Customers that are loyal to a brand have positive sentiments toward the firm, want to repurchase the brand, and promote the brand to others (Al-Msallam, 2015). Loyalty is segmented into three categories: behavior-based, attitudinal, and composite. Loyalty based on behavior looks at regular, repetitive buying behavior as a sign of commitment. It interprets, specifically, as a type of consumer behavior oriented toward a certain brand over time (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Park & Bai, 2014). Attitudinal dimensions allude to a client's intention to repurchase and recommend, both of which are strong markers of a loyal customer (Park & Bai, 2014). A guest may hold high esteem for a hotel and suggest it to others, yet believe the establishment is uneconomical for regulars. The third technique, composite loyalty assessment, combines the first two dimensions (behavioral and attitudinal) and assesses loyalty based on consumers' product choices, proclivity to transfer brands, frequency of buying, and the total amount of purchase (Pritchard & Howard, 1997; Hunter, 1998; Wong et al., 1999; Park & Bai, 2014).

Furthermore, both internal and external variables impact consumer loyalty (Duffy, 2003). He defined internal variables as consumer loyalty to identified names and services, whereas external factors are providers of products and services, along with the capacity of nurturing and retaining clients. Furthermore, Duffy (2003) discovered that the effect of consumer loyalty varies depending on age, social status, gender, and educational background. In another case, Schweizer (2008) does not categorize customer loyalty as internal or external but rather assesses it based on its relevance. Procurement conditions, retail prices regulations of companies, quality control, stock availability, image and reputation, customer trust, prior experience, good feedback, client retention, client involvement, swapping restraints, consumer behavior nuances, merchandise vitality, personal experiences, and so on are identified determinants (2004). It is said that external elements including competitors' defense-marketing efforts and the behaviors of stock providers may be analyzed to determine their influence on the link between relationship quality, service quality, and customer loyalty.

According to Karnikeya Budhwar (2004), restaurant owners must include the demand for flexibility in their thinking. Managers must not overlook the long-term effects of facility access, since such has a consequence on customer-comeback. Su (2004) concentrated on Taiwanese hotel guest comment cards (GCCs) and customer satisfaction management programs. The study's survey sample found that no one hotel met all of the stated ideal practice requirements. According to Akbaba (2005), the importance of service quality in the success of hotel enterprises cannot be overstated. It is critical for hoteliers and administrators of similar industries to understand exactly what their clients desire. Identifying unique consumer expectations, components of service benchmarks, and their corresponding relevance to clients in each section of service-based businesses will undoubtedly assist managers in the issue of enhancing service quality.

Previous research has also discovered that one of the primary predictors of client loyalty is customer happiness, which is required in every firm and market before customers can become loyal (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985; Lin & Wang, 2006)

In many facets of their everyday contacts, customers demonstrate differing degrees of loyalty, dedication, or allegiance. Loyalty arises in consuming settings as well, and has gotten a lot of attention in the marketing literature (Kandampully & Suhartanto, D., 2000). Customer retention has often been defined as occurring when consumers: 1) continuously avail a good or service with frequency, and 2) have desirable opinions toward a standard service being offered.

To achieve consumer happiness, the marketing mix has developed from 4 Ps to 7Ps to address shifting client requirements. Despite the addition of the 3Ps, it was found that pricing, quality, marketing, and physical evidence all have high roles in consumer satisfaction. The majority of studies on the association between Marketing Mix and the satisfaction of customers found a substantial relationship between them. Though there has been countless research on

marketing mix and consumer happiness, they have all been undertaken in foreign nations. As a result, there is a chance for the researcher to examine the DOT-approved hotels in Koronadal City to grab clients not only locally but also worldwide.

Correlations between Measures

Every organization must assess the extent to which its marketing mix strategy contributes to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ibidunni, 2011). Process marketing mix has a significant influence on customer satisfaction, whereas physical evidence marketing mix has no significant influence on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Mucal, Mabaeh, & Noor, 2013). Sangkaworn and Mujtaba (2010) discovered in Changmai, Thailand, that product offering, price, and marketing mix promotion have no effect on consumer satisfaction.

Customer perceptions of products, people, processes, and physical evidence have a positive influence on consumer satisfaction, but customer perceptions of pricing, locations, and promotions harm customer satisfaction (Haryati & Ndubisi, 2011). According to (Zablah et al., 2016), customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty through the results of their research on budget hotels in Thailand, which concluded that every P in the service marketing mix may not be as important in the respondents' views, and only three of the seven were considered the most important; people, process, and physical evidence. According to Kandampully and Hu (2007), a good opinion of the product or service acquired by the client is a key reason to prolong a relationship with a company's service or products, and an important pillar that supports loyalty. Satisfied customers are more likely to patronize, have lower price sensitivity, engage in good recommendation dissemination, and become repetitive clients. Customer satisfaction methods can assist businesses in identifying the critical components influencing consumers' purchase experiences and post-purchase behavior, including as repeat purchases and positive word of mouth (WOM) publicity (Choi & Chu, 2001; Fornell, 1992). A pleased visitor promotes good WOM at no expense to the organization and with greater impact and credibility than traditional advertising (Lee et al., 2006, Tarn, 2005, Villanueva et al., 2008). The World Wide Web amplifies the WOM effect (Dominici, 2009; Trusov et al. 2009).

According to Saupi et al. (2019), firms must deliver quality-based products and services to outperform their competitors to protect, obtain, and sustain market share. Goi (2009) also "acknowledged that marketing mix is an influential idea to simplify the ways marketing duties are managed and facilitated the division of marketing efforts toward consumer demands and satisfaction." This remark was validated by Hassan et al., (2016) study findings in the tourist environment, where six factors of the service marketing mix, except service pricing, were shown to be relevant to customer satisfaction, particularly in Umrah trip services."

Similarly, Alegre and Garau (2010) discovered a substantial association between five parts of the service marketing mix, namely service product, service pricing, service venue, service people, service physical evidence, and consumer happiness in tourist research. In the same sense, the implementation of the marketing mix type of service will affect clients' satisfaction. Hu, Kandampully, and Juwaheet (2009) researched the relationships between service standard, satisfaction, service value perception, and reputation in the Mauritius hotel industry. As a result, they unraveled that the quality of service manifests direct impacts on value perception including the satisfaction of hotel clients.

Many elements, including marketing mix and quality of hotel service, can influence market satisfaction. Several studies (Azhar&Jufrizen, 2017), (Setiawan & Suyuti, 2017), (Tefera & Govender, 2015), (Nurcahyo, Fitriyani, &Hudda, 2017); (Kwok, Jusoh, & Khalifah, 2016); (Rahayu, 2015); (Sukmadi, Riyad, Danurdara, 2017) found that customer perceptions of products, people, procedures, and tangible evidence have a favorable influence on customer satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

Herein research study will be anchored on Lovelock Service Marketing Theory. According to this theory, there are 7P's of the marketing mix in the hotel industry that aid hotel managers to gain and sustain competitive advantage, leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty. These critical 7P's in the Lovelock service marketing mix are product or service, price, place, physical evidence, promotion, people, and process (Lovelock, 2007).

This study is supported by the proposition of Raeesi (2013) of Malaysia that components of the Marketing Mix have a desirable influence on customers' satisfaction and service, and the "Product" owns the largest influence on customer satisfaction if compared with other marketing mix components.

This study is also supported by Li and Krit (2012)'s proposition that: first, service quality has a positive impact on satisfaction; second, customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty; third, quality of service has a positive effect on customer loyalty; and fourth, customer loyalty, service quality, and customer satisfaction all have a positive effect on brand image.

Finally, Abu Khalifeh and Som's (2012) propositions validate this investigation. They investigated hotel service quality using SERVQUAL and discovered that when consumers positively perceive service quality, they eventually become clients with loyalty to the business establishment and the services offered thereof, such as in the Food and Beverages Department; additionally, such is foundational to clients' satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework herein study. It shows the relationship between marketing mix as the independent variable and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable.

The independent variable of this research is the service marketing mix which is composed of the 7Ps from the works of Al-Debi and Mustafa (2014). These are the product that refers to services; "price" which refers to the amount being charged depending on the facilities; "promotion" which refers to the media mix used; "place" which will refer to the location such as the city proper, tourist or heritage areas; "people" which refer to the staff of the hotel; "physical evidence" which refers to the amenities internet, restaurant, conference/meeting rooms, hotel lobby and before and after-sale service; and "process" which pertains to how a particular service is delivered to a client/customer.

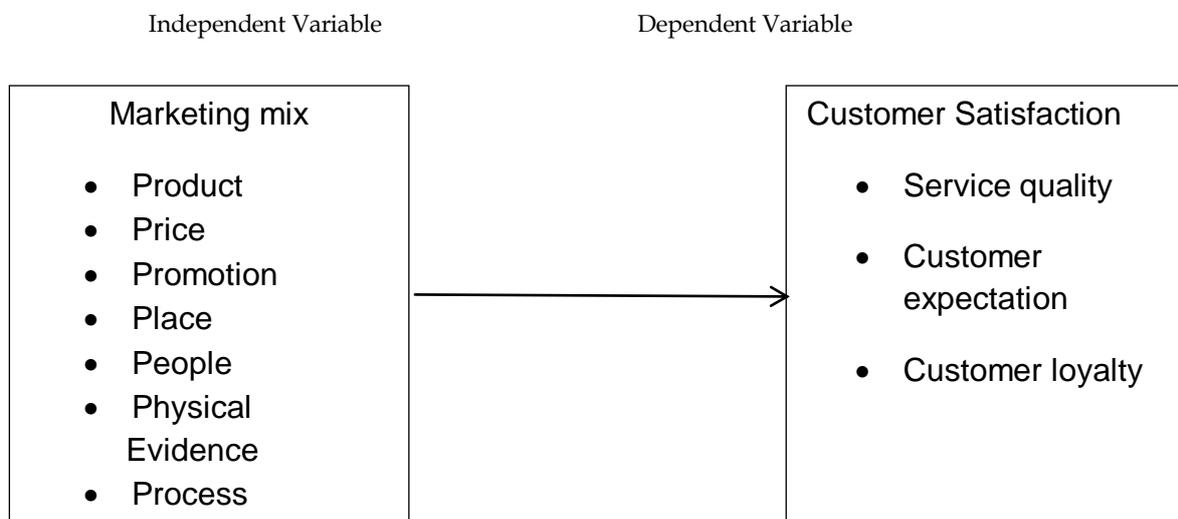


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

The dependent variable of the study is customer satisfaction with indicators of service quality, customer expectation and customer loyalty taken from the works of Angelova and Zequri, (2011). Service quality refers to dependability, visibility, responsiveness, security, and empathy; customer expectation refers to the anticipation made by clients regarding process that may occur during transaction; and customer loyalty which pertains to clients' tendency to re-purchase or re-avail a service after their initial experience.

Significance of the study

In any business, a solid marketing strategy is essential in making a brand, attracting brand new customers and maintaining loyalty thereof. Existing studies and investigation on marketing mix and consumers' satisfaction will provide valuable information to the global hotel industry on how marketing mix as a strategy can attract new and retain customers and ensure that these customers will make repeat bookings or eventually become loyal to the hotel and in effect would contribute to the improvement of lives of hotel employees and the community as well.

The outcomes of the research will be of value in enhancing the field of hospitality management by bringing in new ideas and insights, as well as, relevant new information on how marketing mix strategies can be effective to help hotels become more competitive and survive the stiff competition brought about by globalization through the digital information age.

Within the local scene, the findings of the research study is seen to help and guide the Department of Tourism (DOT) to improve/enhance existing policies relative to accrediting hotels. Consequently, it will also help the DOT-accredited hotels particularly the respective management to come up with doable policies on marketing mix strategies on increasing customers, maintaining existing customers, continuing patronage of customers in improving customer satisfaction management of their respective hotels. Moreover, the results will benefit Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) offering Hotel Restaurant Management and Tourism for they can use it as a reference in enhancing their respective curricula so that students who will undergo on-the-job training are well-equipped. Since this study is the first to be done in Region XII specifically in the regional center - Koronadal City focusing on DOT -accredited hotels, the results may pose as a tool for hotel managers in their pursuit of up-scaled hotel services.

Operational Definition of Terms

The subsequent terms were defined operationally herein research study for better understanding.

Customer satisfaction. Refers to the level of how customers are satisfied with the accredited hotel's quality of service, customer expectations, and customer loyalty

Marketing mix. Refers to the seven (7) P's in marketing which are product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence.

II. METHOD

Herein chapter of the study presents the research design, the research locale, the population and sampling technique, the instrument, the data collection procedures, the statistical tools to be used, including the ethical consideration in the conduct of the study.

Research Design

A quantitative, non-experimental research design utilizing a correlational technique was utilized in the discovery of the research objectives. Such is primarily used to determine and measure the degree of relationship between and among variables. As stated by O' Dwyer & Bernauer (2014) non-experimental, quantitative research design is research that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to conditions or orders of conditions, or both characteristics pertinent to experimental designs.

In their words, Cooper and Schindler (2006) defined descriptive design as a research method that describes the characteristics of a population or phenomenon that is being studied. Descriptive, correlational design is used when the study aims to determine significant relationship between two or more variables (Malhotra, 2017). It is the most proper research design for this study since it intends to determine the extent of influence of the 7Ps on customer satisfaction among DOT-accredited hotels establishments in the City of Koronadal.

Research Locale

The place of conduct of this study is Koronadal City. Figure 2 presents the map of the Philippines as well as the map of Mindanao where the location of the study (marked with a star) was conducted. Koronadal City is the financial, commercial, education, service, and government institution hub of South Cotabato. Koronadal City has evolved to become the province's capital, as well as the new seat of Region XII or SOCSARGEN.

It is situated in the province of South Cotabato's northeastern region. Between 124 degrees 47 minutes and 124 degrees 58 minutes east and 6 degrees 24 minutes and 6 degrees 34 minutes north. The City of Koronadal is flanked in the northwest by Tantaran, South Cotabato, and in the northeast by the municipality of Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat; in the southwest by the municipality of Banga; and in the southeast by the municipalities of Tupi and Tampakan, South Cotabato.

The said city has 7 urban barangays and 20 rural barangays with a total population of 62,654 as of CY2000. Koronadal City is approximately 56 km from the City of General Santos and 136 km from the City of Cotabato. It is accessible by all means of land transport from both urban locations (PSA, 2017). At present, there are 46 hotels and inns in the city and only 33 of these hotels are DOT-accredited. The services offered by these hotels are the services commonly offered in any hotel which include internet services, hot and cold showers, transportation, and restaurants.

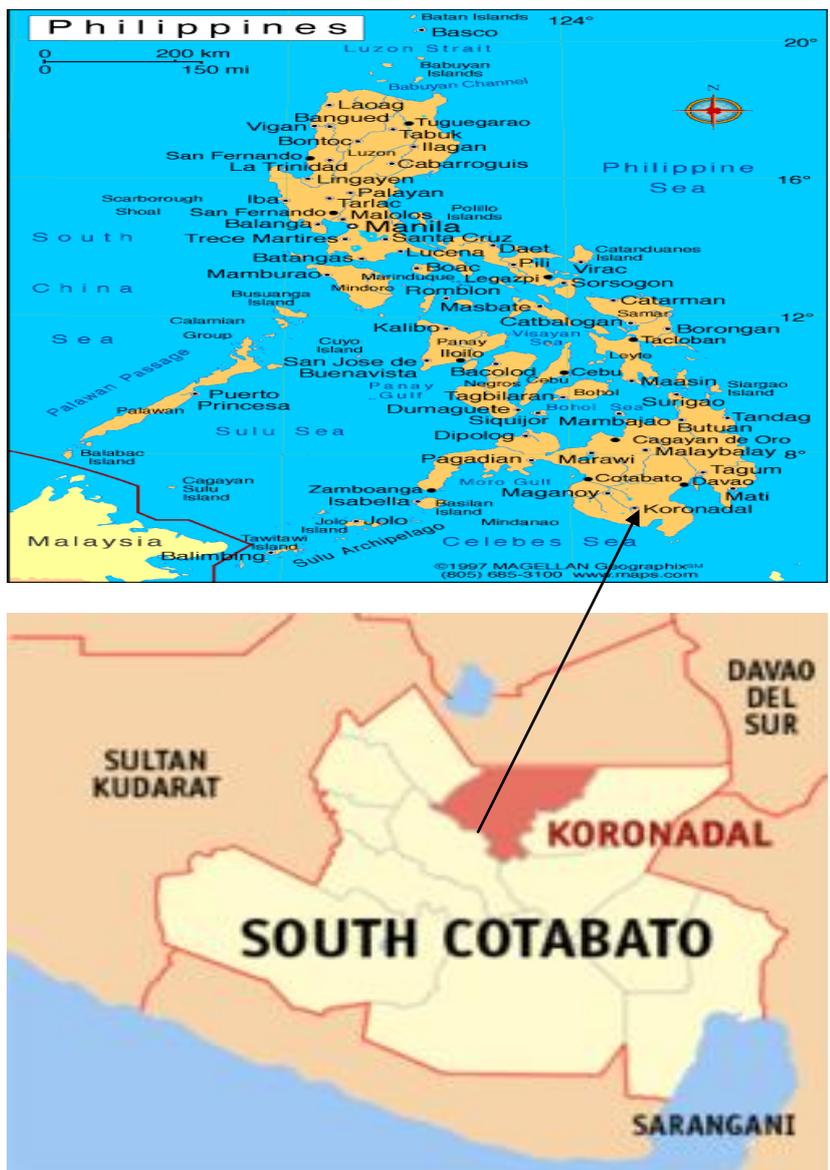


Figure 2. The Philippine Map and the Map of Koronadal City

Population and Sample

The respondents of the study are composed of 350 guests coming from different DOT- accredited hotels in Koronadal City. A total of 35 respondents each were taken from these hotels which include: FB Hotel, Paraiso Verde Hotel, Green States Suites, Hotel de Viajera, Villa Amor Hotel, Mezza Hotel, PCC Homes Suites Homes, EMR Suites, Grand Westerly Inn, MD Square. The number was deemed adequate for correlational study and is already reliable for establishing the significance of the connection between the two variables employed in this research. The sample size in application to Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient varies from author to author. Regarding the number of participants, there are some arguments from experts. Creswell (2012) explained that there should be 30 participants in the correlation method to establish a relationship. Frankeal et al., (2008,) also stated that the minimum acceptable sample for a correlation study is 30. They also add that if the data which is obtained from a sample is smaller than 30, it may give an inaccurate result of the degree of correlation

Stratified, random sampling and proportionate allocation technique was used in this study for effective representation. Weiss (2007) viewed this sampling design as appropriate to be used when equally accurate estimates are needed for each echelon, as well as, for the overall population. This approach distinguishes itself by allocating unit samples that are equal to each stratum. If the identical level of precision is necessary for every stratum (each set of informants in the research study) including the general population, this method is applied.

The respondents included were those who have availed the services of the DOT-accredited hotels and had experienced checking-in in these kinds of hotels more than once. Moreover, those guests who had lodged only once and had not billeted in DOT-accredited hotels were excluded from participating in the study. Also, those hotel guests who did not intend to voluntarily take part in the research were excluded. On one hand, all participants of the study were made aware that they could opt to withdraw from participating in the study should they feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

Research Instrument

The study used an adapted survey questionnaires from Xie (2014) for describing the level of the marketing mix, and from Parasuraman et al. (1985) for measuring the level of customer satisfaction. The instrument undergone content validation by a panel of experts and internal reliability test using Cronbach Alpha.

The final research questionnaire was segmented into three components Part 1 determined the respondent’s profile; Part 2 described the level of marketing mix; and part 3determined the respondent’s perceived level of customer satisfaction. A Likert-type scale with a 5-point rating was utilized to determine the range of Marketing Mix and satisfaction of customers in DOT-accredited hotels in Koronadal City.

The instruments on Marketing Mix and customers’ satisfaction were also pre-tested through Cronbach’s Alpha formula, also known as the Coefficient Alpha to check its reliability and internal consistency. The measurement of reliability refers to the extent to which it is a consistent measure of the research objective (Taber, 2018). The result of the Cronbach’s Alpha Test for marketing mix was 0.968 while the customer satisfaction result, it showed an alpha score of 0.981. Both scores indicated relatively high consistency.

In interpreting the responses of the study participants, the following range of means was used for the marketing mix.

Range	Description Level	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	The measures of Marketing Mix are always observed
3.40 – 4.19	High	The measures of Marketing Mix are oftentimes observed

2.60 - 3.39	Average	The measures of Marketing Mix are sometimes observed
1.80 - 2.59	Low	The measures of Marketing Mix are rarely observed
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	The measures of Marketing Mix are not observed

Similarly, in interpreting the responses of the study participants on customer satisfaction, the following range of means was used.

Range	Description Level	Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	The measures of Customer Satisfaction are always observed
3.40 - 4.19	High	The measures of Customer Satisfaction are oftentimes observed
2.60 - 3.39	Average	The measures of Customer Satisfaction are sometimes observed
1.80 - 2.59	Low	The measures of Customer Satisfaction are rarely observed
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	The measures of Customer Satisfaction are not observed

Internal and external experts validated the adapted and modified questionnaires. There were four internal validators and one external validator. The questionnaires were validated by their clarity of directions and items, the suitability of items, the adequateness of items per category, presentation, and organization of items, attainment of purpose, objectivity, and evaluation scale. As a result, the modified instrument obtained a rating of 4.03 described as very good.

Data Collection

With regards to the data collection, the initial step done was to write a letter seeking permission to conduct the study to appropriate authorities. Simultaneously, the researcher developed the chapter 1 and chapter 2 which contained the collection of the literatures and studies of prominent scholars and experts on the herein topic. Subsequently, the researcher modified the survey questionnaires to be used and have it validated by experts.

After the questionnaires were validated, there was a conduct of pilot testing to establish the reliability and credibility of the research instruments. When the researcher ascertained the reliability of the instruments, it was then distributed to target respondents. Retrieval of the filled-out questionnaires came after. Finally, the retrieved filled-out questionnaires were tabulated for statistical analysis and interpretation.

Statistical Tools

Various descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the information gathered. Specifically:

Mean was utilized to identify the level of the Marketing Mix and customer satisfaction of DOT-accredited hotels in Koronadal City

Pearson r was utilized to determine the significance of the relationship of marketing mix and customer satisfaction

Regression analysis was used in determining the significance of the influence of the Marketing Mix on customer satisfaction and to determine which domain of marketing mix best impacts customer satisfaction.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical principles and guidelines were followed in the entirety of herein research endeavor:

Voluntary Participation. The researcher ensured that the participation of the respondents was voluntary and no amount of compensation, whether financial or non-financial, was observed.

Honesty and Integrity. The researcher ensured that honesty was observed in the gathering and reporting of data, results, methods, and procedures; and no fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of the data were done. Clarifications on significant errors that were brought to attention were immediately rectified. The researcher kept due promises and agreements, acted with sincerity, and remained consistent in her thoughts and in actions at all times.

Objectivity and Carefulness. The researcher avoided bias in data analysis and other dimensions in the research where objectivity is expected. The researcher also averted careless errors, and negligence, and carefully examined every facet of the paper.

Openness and Responsibility. The researcher observed at all times the confidentiality of communications and agreements with the respondents. The researcher, before distributing the instrument, discussed the intention and the outcome of the survey.

Respect for Intellectual Property. The researcher honored at all times ownerships or copyrights, as well as other types of intellectual property. Permissions to utilize unpublished information, results, and methodologies were practiced when necessary. Citing of all sources of information was observed and no plagiarism was made. Acknowledgment and citations were made for all borrowed ideas.

Avoiding Plagiarism. The researcher at all times adhered to intellectual copyrights and cited and acknowledged all sources of information lifted. The researcher sought the expert advice of the adviser on the works of literature compiled, as well as the discussions and interpretations of the results of the study. The researcher kept all notes and drafts with proper labels and marks. The researcher subjected the paper to an electronic, anti-plagiarism tool called Turnitin, to identify content matched with other sources before the final submission.

Avoiding Fabrication. In avoiding the fabrication of the results of data, the researcher strictly adhered that all data were obtained and none were created. Also, no altering of data by substitution was committed and all obtained data were accurately described.

Avoiding Falsification of data. To avoid falsification of data, the researcher at all time solely recorded the survey data so that no falsification of data was done. The researcher at all times adhered to the correct reporting of data collected. No unfounded data were used in the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The researcher availed the services of a statistician to ensure that appropriate statistical instruments were utilized in the analysis of accumulated quantitative data herein study.

Conflict of Interest. The researcher assured that no conflict of interest had occurred. The researcher made the following decisions: 1) to divulge any financial interest or limitation from the research in which one party has an equity interest; 2) to give attention on the investigation process, including the methodologies of research and analysis, as well as research demonstration, and to try and improve these processes to produce a superior research product; and 3) to subject the paper to scrutinizing by a panel of qualified panelists in order to receive scientifically sound research outcomes.

Competence and Accountability. The researcher pursued research activities in accordance to the accepted standards of the UM Professional School and took steps to maintain and promote competence in all research activities relative to the conduct of this study.

Protection of Research Subjects. The researcher respected the privacy of research participants by ensuring that the data provided by the participants shall be kept in the strictest confidentiality and guaranteed their rights to withdraw when opted to.

Privacy and Confidentiality. In this study, the confidentiality and privacy of the data gathered from the informants were ensured. Names and other personal information were not asked in the study to safeguard their identities and to enable them to participate without any fear of revelation or involvement in the study. Any information that requires confidentiality was handled with utmost care. The researcher complied with the requirements of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

In adhering to the confidentiality of the participant's information, the following steps were taken:

- The data collected by the researcher were subjected to the rules of confidentiality set out by the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.
- Issues of confidentiality were addressed at all times during data collection. No results were shared with unauthorized individuals and without the consent of the respondents. The researcher maintained all identifying and contact information required for data collection separately from the data themselves and destroyed contact information after the data collecting period
- The researcher secured that the participant's responses in surveys designated as anonymous be anonymous completely. Anonymous survey responses cannot be linked back to the informants. Unless a respondent willingly provides personal or contact information using the survey instrument, no personally identifiable information can be retrieved.
- Data collected on paper were securely stored when not in current use and when the study is submitted to UM Professional Schools, personally-identifiable information required for data collection will be destroyed securely for confidentiality purposes.

Informed Consent. In this study, informed consent was secured from the research informants involved in the research. The researcher conducted a detailed and comprehensive explanation regarding the intention of the research to the 350 student-respondents who participated in the study. The researcher ensured that the condition of the consent was voluntary. The participants were given enough data and proper understanding regarding the presented research and the consequences of their taking part in the study such as possibilities of what may happen to the information they contributed, what will happen to the results, and what will be the possible disadvantages in taking part of the study. The most important thing considered was that the form must bear the signature of the participant which implies that he/she participates in the study voluntarily.

Risks and Benefits. In this study, a careful assessment of foreseeable risks, burdens, and benefits to the participants were made. It was anticipated that participants of the study may face some inconveniences and discomforts in the conduct of the study. One discomfort and inconvenience respondents could have experienced was the unpleasant schedule in answering the survey questionnaire, especially for those participants with very hectic schedules. To address this, the researcher administered the questionnaire at the time most convenient to respondents and give them extra time to answer the questionnaires. Furthermore, to ensure that the potential benefits of the participants are greater than the potential harm, the researcher ensured to produce a quality and informative study that is beneficial to the society in the form of new knowledge. As to the safety of the participants, the researcher did not conduct any activity which can expose them to any physical or psychological harm.

Authorship. As can be seen, the primary author of this research is the person whose name appears in the title page of this manuscript. She has made substantial contributions from the conception to design, to acquisition of data, and up until its completion. Along with her is her adviser as a co-author who helped in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of this research.

III. RESULTS

Presented herein chapter are the findings regarding the marketingmix and customersatisfaction in the context of DOT-accredited Hotels in Koronandal City. Presentations are arranged as follows: the level of marketing mix used by DOT-accredited hotels, the level of customer satisfaction among DOT-accredited hotels, the correlation between marketing mix and customer satisfaction, and the regression analysis on the domain of marketing mix that best influences customer satisfaction.

Further,it could be noted that the standard deviation of the mean scores on the levels of the identified variables ranged from 0.35 to 0.53 which are all below 1.0, the typical standard deviation for a 5 point Likert scale. This indicates consistency of responses.

Level of Marketing Mix

The first objective of this study was to describe the level of marketing mix employed by DOT accredited hotels. As shown in Table 1, the level of marketing mix in terms of products, prices, promotions, places, people, physical evidences, and processes yielded an overall mean of 3.97 described as *high* with a standard deviation of 0.50. This means that the measures on marketing mix used by DOT accredited hotels were oftentimes observed. Furthermore, process, people, and physical evidence noted to have the highest mean scores which indicate stronger manifestation as compared with other indicators.

Table 1
Level of marketing mix used by DOT-Accredited Hotels

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Products	0.45	3.93	High
Prices	0.48	3.86	High
Place	0.47	3.93	High
Promotion	0.47	3.89	High
People	0.48	3.96	High
Process	0.50	3.97	High
Physical Evidence	0.44	3.96	High
Overall	0.50	3.97	High

Level of Customer Satisfaction

The second objective of this study was to determine the level of customer satisfaction among DOT- accredited hotels. As revealed in Table 2, the level of customer satisfaction in terms of service quality, customer expectation, and customer loyalty showed an overall mean of 3.92 interpreted as *high* with a standard deviation of 0.37 Results indicate that the measures of customer satisfaction are oftentimes manifested. Furthermore, customer expectation was noted to have the highest mean score, followed by service quality and customer loyalty.

Table 2
Level of customer satisfaction among DOT-Accredited Hotels

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Service Quality	0.35	3.89	High
Customer Expectation	0.48	4.03	High
Customer Loyalty	0.53	3.83	High
Overall	0.37	3.92	High

Significance on the Relationship between

Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction

One important aim of this study was to determine whether or not marketing mix employed by DOT-accredited hotels is associated with customer satisfaction. Presented in Table 3 is the computed R-value on the marketing mix used and customer satisfaction among DOT-accredited hotels. It can be gleaned from the table that indicators products, prices, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence registered an R-value of 0.313, 0.426, 0.421, 0.509, 0.541, 0.594, and 0.540 respectively denoting that these observed indicators have slight positive correlations to customer satisfaction.

Generally, the combined computed R-value of 0.681 fell within the threshold of moderate positive correlation. The result indicate that marketing mix has a significant direct relationship with the customer satisfaction, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Significance on the Influence of Marketing Mix on Customer Satisfaction

Presented in Table 4 is the result of the regression analysis made on marketing mix employed and customer satisfaction among DOT-accredited hotels. Findings of the study revealed that marketing mix influences customer satisfaction with an F value of 46.284 and $p < 0.05$. This means that on the aggregate capacity, marketing mix used by DOT-accredited hotels, significantly impacts their customer satisfaction given the probability value of less than 0.05, hence the rejection of null hypothesis. The R² value of 0.487 suggests that 48.70 percent of customer satisfaction can be explained by marketing mix used by the DOT-accredited hotels. The remaining 51.30 percent can be explicated by other factors not covered in this study.

Table 3
Significance on the Relationship between Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction among DOT-accredited Hotels

Marketing Mix	Customer Satisfaction			
	Service Quality	Customer Expectation	Customer Loyalty	Overall
Products	.322**	.196**	.262**	.313**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
Prices	.487**	.362**	.238**	.426**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
Place	.518**	.343**	.223**	.421**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
Promotion	.576**	.401**	.318**	.509**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
People	.536**	.478**	.340**	.541**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
Process	.670**	.438**	.399**	.594**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
Physical Evidence	.615**	.424**	.335**	.540**
	.000	.000	.000	.000
Overall	.758**	.539**	.430**	.681**
	.000	.000	.000	.000

Furthermore, on a singular capacity, the data revealed that four (4) domains of marketing mix used have significant influence on the customer satisfaction which include: promotion domain, $t = 3.270$, $p = 0.001$; people domain, $t = 3.756$, $p = 0.000$; process domain, $t = 3.866$, $p = 0.000$; and physical evidence domain, $t = 3.654$, $p = 0.000$, since the obtained p-values are less than the 0.05 alpha value. Of the four domains, *process* was noted to be the best predictor of customer satisfaction with reference to the beta standardized coefficients.

Table 4

Significance on the Influence of Marketing Mix on Customer Satisfaction among DOT-accredited Hotels

Customer Satisfaction				
Marketing Mix	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	.929		5.179	.000
Products	.066	.080	1.881	.061
Prices	.062	.082	1.758	.080
Place	.011	.014	.292	.770
Promotion	.131	.165	3.270	.001
People	.149	.193	3.756	.000
Process	.183	.221	3.866	.000
Physical Evidence	.159	.188	3.654	.000
R	.698			
R ²	.487			
ΔR	.477			
F	46.284			
ρ	.000			

IV. DISCUSSION

Presented in this chapter are the discussions on the Marketing Mix employed, customer satisfaction, the correlation between marketing mix and customer satisfaction, regression analysis of the two variables, and the conclusion and recommendations drawn from the results of the investigation.

Marketing Mix

The overall high level of the perceived marketing mix used by DOT-accredited hotels is due to the high ratings given by the respondents on the indicators which are: products, prices, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The customers of the hotels believed that the DOT-accredited hotels used and manifest the precepts of the marketing mix. It further suggests that hotel owners and managers have effectively made use of the elements of the marketing mix in their hotel operations as part of their strategies for organizational success.

This result confirms the report made by Yelkur (2000) that hoteliers need to realize that the service Marketing Mix factors (product or service, price, place, physical evidence, promotion, participants, process, and productivity or quality) can help increase customer satisfaction and customer retention. Similarly, Ibadunni (2011) pointed out that every organization needs to measure the degree of its marketing mix strategy that will contribute to customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty. The same result is parallel to the idea of Bay, Petrizzi, and Gill (2008) that when an organization applied the marketing mix in their business, it will help them to increase the sales and profits of their organization, hence, achieving their marketing level.

Customer Satisfaction

The overall high level of customer satisfaction is due to the high ratings given by the respondents on service quality, customer expectation, and customer loyalty level. It implies that customers of the DOT-accredited hotels believed that these hotels have evidently rendered them quality service, and their expectations were met, thus, making them loyal to their chosen hotel.

This finding supports the concept of Dominici and Guzzo (2010) on customer satisfaction relative to a service-oriented industry. They underline that customer satisfaction is the concept that emphasizes the need of creating value for consumers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating the competence and obligation to

satisfy their needs. The result also confirms the claim of Abraheem et al. (2011) that customer satisfaction is important to hotels to assess their service performance and ensure their operational success.

In the works of Amin et al. (2013), they argue that those hotels which provide higher services do have a higher number of satisfied customers. The same argument is posited by Holjevac et al. (2009) that providing services on what the customers prefer is a starting point for providing customer satisfaction and by Craven and Piercy (2008); and Bucak (2014) that customer satisfaction is the center of organizational effort and a key to its success and survival.

Significance on the Relationship between Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction

The results revealed that there exists a significant statistical relationship between marketing mix and customers' satisfaction among DOT-accredited hotels. This contends that the effective use of marketing mix contributes to gaining customer satisfaction. This further indicates that hoteliers must determine what service attribute is most likely to give satisfaction to customers. Hence, hotel owners must explore the different elements of the marketing mix and apply them in their operations to improve customer satisfaction. Also, hoteliers and managers must methodically survey their customers' level of satisfaction for continuous improvement and quality assurance.

The above findings correspond to the study of Chen and Wang (2009) that the positive evaluation of the product or service that the customer acquires is a major reason to continue a relationship with a company's service or products, and an important pillar that upholds loyalty. Satisfied consumers are more likely to repurchase, have reduced price sensitivity, engage in good word-of-mouth recommendations, and become regular customers.

Additionally, the study results find parallelism with the claim of Saupi et al. (2019) that organizations have to provide quality-based goods and services to outcompete their competitors and ensure customer satisfaction, and in the process secure, receive and maintain their market share. In the same argument, the results support Goi (2009) that marketing mix is an influential concept to simplify the ways marketing tasks are managed and permitted the segregation of marketing efforts towards the fulfillment of customer needs and satisfaction.

Similarly, the findings support the study of Hassan et al. (2016) in the tourism context where six elements of the service marketing mix except service price were found significant to customer satisfaction, especially in Umrah travel services. The same result was found in the study of Alegre and Garau (2010) that there is a considerable association between the five parts of the service marketing mix, namely service product, service pricing, service venue, service people, and service physical evidence, and satisfaction of clients.

Significance on the Influence of Marketing Mix Used on Customer Satisfaction

A regression analysis was used to determine the significant influence of the marketing mix on customer satisfaction in the context of DOT-accredited hotels. Data revealed that the respondents' overall perception of the marketing mix influence their satisfaction with their chosen hotel.

This finding corroborates the proposition of various authors that several elements can impact the satisfaction of tourists-clients, and that includes the marketing mix and service quality. These include several studies of Azhar and Jufrizen (2017); Setiawan and Suyuti (2017); Tefera and Govender (2015); Nurcahyo, Fitriyani and Hudda (2017); Kwok, Jusoh, and Khalifah (2016); Rahayu (2015); Sukmadi, Riyad, Danurdara and Masatip (2014); Liu and Yen (2010); and Permatasari, Murwani, and Suharto (2017) that the marketing mix impact the quality of tourist satisfaction.

Further, the study results confirm the work of Haryati and Ndubisi (2011) that customer perception of products, people, processes, and physical evidence have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, in their singular capacities, promotions, people, processes, and physical evidence were revealed to have a significant impact on customers' satisfaction. Hence, if hotels can effectively use promotions as a component in their marketing mix, then it could help gain customer satisfaction. This finding concurs with Almuhrzi and Alsawafi (2017) that promotional schemes perform a very significant part in securing satisfaction among customers. The result also supports the study of Mohammad et al. (2012) in their investigation of the impact of marketing mix elements on tourist satisfaction where they found promotion to be significantly related to customer satisfaction.

As for people as a predictor of satisfaction, the study results suggest that hotel management needs to continuously improve the training level, interpersonal behaviors, knowledge in rendering the service, and visual

presentation of their personnel as they matter to customer satisfaction. This finding coincides with the idea of Thureau (2004) that customer orientation of service employees is a key driver of customer satisfaction. The intermingling of employees and clients molds desirable satisfaction among customers. Also, Yang and Coates (2010) explain that employees should be competent enough to serve the customers for when employees are competent, service satisfaction is ascertained.

On one hand, process as a predictor is important for service-based establishments. Process systems are foundational to the brand image of organizations and it results in value-adding and improved service quality. This result concurs with the idea of Larsen et al. (2007) that when waiting time for a service of any nature is improved and became efficient, it impacts the satisfaction of the clients. Thus, hoteliers must know the service time consumed by a customer. Similarly, the findings of the study support the idea of Hiranakitti, Mechinda, and Manjing, (2009) that process is considered by customers and forms the basis of customer satisfaction, especially with the purchase. With all these said, process management guarantees hotel quality.

Lastly, physical evidence as a predictor refers to the physical characteristics of the hotel such as schemes, themes, physical layout, music accompaniment, and overall appearance of the establishment. Such are valuable proof that attracts and adds to the number of satisfied customers obtained from the product and service providers. This result agrees with the idea of Oh et al. (2008); Mahmood and Khan (2014) and Hanaysha (2018) that the physical environment differentiates a company from competitors and is one important factor influencing the purchasing decisions and satisfaction of customers.

Finally, of the four domains, the process was noted as the highest predictor of satisfaction among customers. As a result, service process operation should be developed to satisfy consumers, and service process operation should be combined with effective communication to promote customer satisfaction. These findings corroborate the work of Nambiar et al. (2019) that when effectively implemented, an efficient process does not only impact the quality of production and maximize the use of resources but also impacts the satisfaction of clients. An efficient process improves customer experience and so their satisfaction.

An organization's process may manifest effects on the performance of the services it offers, which includes the delivery of its product to customers. It is critical in business to be simple, which means being efficient, helpful, and prompt. By making sure your business has a good process in place, you will also save time and money due to greater efficiency, and your standard of service to customers will remain consistent, which is excellent for developing a brand reputation and customer loyalty (Focus 7, 2018).

Services are executed through processes. Creation and delivery of services require the undertaking of activities in set sequences by following given procedures. Managing the service process is crucial from a marketing perspective due to the following: a) Services are processes that are planned, executed, monitored, and controlled by the operations department. Operations are not governed by the same considerations as that marketing. There is likely to be a clash between the internal orientation of operations and the external orientation of marketing. The operations department is generally guided by the goals of efficiency whereas marketing pursues effectiveness; b) It is easier for operations to adopt standardization as it facilitates ease and efficiency of process execution. Marketing, on the other hand, wants procedures to be adaptable to meet variances in client expectations. The process aspect becomes a component of the marketing mix in services since services are created by executing a collection of systems by the operations department. Although these processes fall within the domain of operations their subjects are customers. It is this juxtaposition of customers and operations that necessitates the inclusion of processes in marketing mix so that these reflect customer needs and wants (Vishakha, 2018)

V. Conclusion

Given the foregoing results, the study concludes that the level of marketing mix employed by DOT-accredited hotels is high. This means that the use of the elements of the marketing mix is oftentimes manifested. Of the seven marketing mix, parameters, people, process, and physical evidence were noted to have a stronger manifestation as compared with other indicators. Meanwhile, the study also yielded a high degree of customer satisfaction which indicates that hotel guests are happy and content with the kind of services offered by the hotels most of the time.

As with the association and statistical influence between the two variables, it can be construed that the marketing mix has a significant, direct relationship and can influence customer satisfaction. This implies that the effective use of the marketing mix contributes to ensuring customer satisfaction. Further, when regressed singularly, the process domain emerged as the best predictor of customer satisfaction, thus hotel service processes can greatly impact hotel guests' satisfaction. Essentially, the findings of this study support the propositions of Lovelock (2207); Raesi (2013), and Pengurusan (2015) as outlined in the theoretical framework in which not the entire marketing mix support customer satisfaction instead it was only the process domain.

Recommendations

The result underscores that in an aggregate and singular capacities, promotions, process, people, and physical evidence significantly impact the satisfaction of hotel clients among DOT-accredited hotels. The researcher, therefore, recommends that an enhancement program focusing on the four domains be implemented among DOT-accredited hotels to sustain or further improve the hotel establishment's effective use of its marketing mix, thus also improving customers' satisfaction.

Pursuing the above recommendation, the researcher further recommends the conduct of regular annual seminars and training among hotel personnel that would help them gain the necessary skills and competence needed to improve their service performance, especially in the delivery and implementation of service processes.

Moreover, an inventory of hotels' current technology and equipment must also be conducted to evaluate its capacity to fulfill the high expectations and demands of customers in the context of processes and physical evidence. They have to upgrade and acquire modern hotel equipment to provide more efficient hotel services.

Furthermore, regular benchmarking activities from successful hotels in the national and nearby regions may be conducted to identify best practices from the leaders of the industry and so adopt those that are applicable. It is also recommended that an annual customer satisfaction survey be conducted to be informed on how satisfied customers are and take necessary actions that would address identified customers' issues and concerns.

Finally, to confirm and enhance this study, conducting similar studies is encouraged, incorporating other elements not discussed herein study. The inclusion of all types of hotels in the research locale is likewise recommended.

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