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# **THE ROLE OF THE MARKETING MIX IN ACHIEVING CUSTOMER LOYALTY-AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE OPINIONS OF A SAMPLE OF EMPLOYEES AT THE KALEH FACTORY FOR DAIRY PRODUCTS IN THE HOLY CITY OF KARBALA**

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## **Abstract**

The current research was concerned with studying the nature of the relationship and the influence between two variables represented by (marketing mix and customer loyalty). The research sample was a group of workers in the Kaleh Dairy Factory in the holy city of Karbala. The data collection department distributed the questionnaire to obtain the sample's opinions about the research variables and to reach accurate answers about the nature of the factory's adoption of the research variables. and the nature of the answers was analyzed statistically through the spss statistical program to get to the fact of accepting or rejecting the two hypotheses of the research, which are the hypotheses of correlation and influence relationships, and through the statistical results, the two hypothesis was accepted based on the level Statistical significance. The research reached a set of recommendations that support the application of the concept of marketing mix in the factory, which means Markets consider the elements of the marketing mix as an important and influential factor for success, achieving a competitive advantage, and enhancing customer loyalty.

**Keywords:** Marketing mix, customer loyalty, dairy products, promotion strategy, pricing.

## **Introduction**

With the ongoing development and intense competition facing organizations today, it has become imperative to have strong foundations that enable them to continue their operations and secure a strong position in the market or target sector. This is achieved through a number of procedures and policies implemented within the organization. Therefore, leading organizations pay significant attention to the elements of the marketing mix, which enable the organization to keep pace with developments and competition in the market, ensuring continuity and achieving the organization's goals. Furthermore, this mix must have a competitive advantage, creating a force that distinguishes organizations from one another and enables them to capture a significant market share. The marketing mix, with its four elements: product, price, promotion, and distribution, represents a set of decisions that represent the bulk of the focus in achieving the marketing objectives they aspire to, ensuring continued market share, and achieving success and leadership in the target sector (1) .

There must be a marketing mix appropriate to the customer based on the surrounding environment. The elements of the marketing mix now represent the environment surrounding organizations, affecting their sales volume, profits, and reputation. A quality product, a price appropriate for the target segment, and appropriate promotion and placement are strategic decisions that the organization must work to determine(2). Hence, the impact of the marketing mix on competitive advantage will make organizations leaders and able to obtain a large market share. The elements of competitive advantage include cost, which enables the organization to obtain the largest possible market share; quality, which makes customers trust what the organization offers; creativity, which represents the organization's engine of attraction; and flexibility, which is the speed of response to changes in product design and to suit the customer, making it the most desirable. Time or delivery is the final element of competitive advantage, as it either increases or decreases customer demand for the product. Or timely service makes it successful and distinctive (3) .

Business organizations face challenges that pose an obstacle to their growth. They differ in their approach to targeting these markets, their market strategy, and how to deal with customers. Consequently, they are unable to accurately define their markets due to the rapid changes in all areas of life. They can then target these markets by adopting a clear and effective strategy, developing a marketing mix that achieves customer satisfaction in that market, and competing with each other to enhance their market share. This requires confronting these challenges, working to increase their size, and understanding their impact on the organization's performance. The success and excellence of organizations depend to a large extent on the ability of organizations to secure their market share(4) .

Customer loyalty is a predictor of purchasing behavior and repeat business. The greater the customer's loyalty, the greater the purchase volume. However, enhancing customer loyalty is not an easy task given the plethora of alternatives and competitors, as well as the vast array of options, products, prices, and brand names. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are achieved when performance exceeds customer expectations. Therefore, organizations have realized that their success, stability, and sustainability depend on their ability to understand and meet their customers' needs and desires. This is why they have taken it upon themselves to develop more advanced customer-centric marketing strategies. These facts highlight the importance

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of this research and delving into it to arrive at results that contribute to achieving market benefits, supporting development, increasing customer satisfaction, and enhancing loyalty (5) .

## **2 . Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. marketing mix**

The marketing mix is defined as a set of marketing activities that integrate and interconnect with each other to perform the marketing function optimally. Therefore, the marketing mix is one of the most important elements of any organization's marketing strategy. The process of constructing and balancing the marketing mix is unique to each organization or product (i.e., it varies from one organization to another). The benefit of having a general framework for the marketing mix was the nature of the current business environment and the extent of their need for the marketing mix. Some suggest that organizations need a new approach to the marketing mix, while others believe that the traditional concept of the marketing mix should be built by business organizations(6) .

The marketing mix is one of the key concepts in contemporary marketing. It can be defined as "the set of basic decisions taken by the marketing manager regarding all aspects related to the basic and practical variables used, known as product, price, distribution, and communication policies."(7) It is also defined as "the combination of marketing activities that can be controlled by the organization and directed at a specific market segment of consumers. The marketing mix also relates to the strategy followed by the organization in planning the aspects of marketing activity related to the products that are introduced to the market.(8) It is also defined as "a set of absolute variables in the market that have an impact on consumer behavior. These variables are the product, its price, distribution, and promotion. Choosing the elements of these variables is necessary, especially when allocating financial resources and according to the chosen strategy and available means(9) .

The marketing mix consists of four elements that can be identified as follows(9). The product, which includes all the plans the organization prepares for it and the developments that can be made to ensure it achieves its appropriate competitive position in the market. This means that organizations do not simply introduce the product to the market, but also work to introduce new products to the market or make appropriate developments to them, whether in terms of content, form, color, size, etc.

5. Price is the second element of the marketing mix and includes setting an appropriate pricing policy in line with market conditions and consumer purchasing power, taking into account any discounts that can be offered to other intermediaries within the distribution outlets. Then comes the distribution element, which encompasses the activities related to selecting the appropriate distribution outlet to deliver goods and services to consumers and end users, ensuring sufficient control over the flow of goods. Here, it must be noted that an organization does not rely on a single distribution outlet; rather, distribution can take place through more than one outlet simultaneously, with or without direct control over those outlets. This choice and decision to deal with these outlets over others is determined by the nature of the product the organization deals with, the breadth of the market, and the extent of existing competition. In addition to the product, price, and distribution, comes the

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promotion element, which is the means used to communicate and inform about the products the organization deals with, whether through advertising, personal selling, public relations, etc.

The marketing mix is important to an organization because it focuses its attention on buyers who it finds a specific benefit in—those who are willing to buy only. Consequently, costs are reduced because the organization will use methods that enable it to reach these specific customers, not the entire market. For example, if the organization wants to sell average-quality perfumes, it must use advertising methods that reach a large audience, such as magazines, because they touch a large number of consumers. However, in the case of high-quality, distinctive perfumes, the organization must use advertisements in specialized magazines, turning all readers of these magazines into potential customers. From this, it can be said that the marketing mix achieves a return on investment for the organization, and its importance is no less significant for the consumer. This is because each marketing mix is directed at a specific segment of the market. Therefore, its effectiveness is greater because it is more in line with consumer desires. Each individual finds a product that suits their tastes, in the place they usually receive it from, at a price they are willing to pay, and supported by advertising campaigns that attract them to the product, positively influencing them, and encouraging them to purchase it. This not only leads to an increase in the number of buyers, but also makes them more loyal to the product. This is what is called the effectiveness of the marketing mix(10) .

## **2.2. Customer Loyalty**

Loyalty has many definitions, including those of researchers, management scholars, and economists. Despite the differences in linguistic formulation, through our research into all of these definitions, we found that they all agree in terms of content. Some define it as “the customer’s or client’s adherence and constant renewal of his desire to purchase a particular product, and his retention or insistence on ordering it over similar or competing alternative products.(11) Others defined loyalty as "a measure of the degree of repeat purchase by the customer. It is a measure of the customer's desire for mutual participation in the organization's activities. Such a customer possesses a strong commitment in light of his previous experience dealing with the organization and his preference for its products, services, and brand, which achieves an advantage for the organization over its competitors(12) .

Some define it as "relatively exclusive attachment to a brand or group of brands during continuous purchasing processes. It is the result of a psychological process that leads to a meaningful choice. Loyalty differs from inertia, which is known as simple, repeated purchasing or false loyalty, which is represented by clinging to the organization by repurchasing the same brand or continuing to request the same services without a positive attitude (13).

The word "loyalty" has a positive connotation that private businesses and service providers strive to achieve. Loyalty can be viewed as a behavior through repeated interactions without choosing any other alternatives. Loyalty can also be viewed as an attitude, whereby the individual has formed their emotions and feelings toward the service. In this case, the matter

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has gone beyond the mere process of repeated interactions to the stage of urging and encouraging others to engage with this institution or use certain services(14) .

Organizations' efforts to gain customer loyalty are due to the benefits it brings and its direct impact on corporate profitability. Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant importance of customer loyalty, including:

1 - The cost of retaining loyal customers is lower when compared to the cost of attracting new customers. Studies have shown that the cost of attracting new customers is several times greater than the cost of retaining and maintaining existing customers (15) .

2 - A loyal customer is a valuable resource for an organization when undertaking new activities. Furthermore, the recommendations of these customers often lead to attracting new customers without the organization incurring any additional marketing costs (16) .

3 - Limit the use of promotional pricing, especially since a loyal customer is willing to pay a higher price to obtain the desired value. Furthermore, a new customer may need several years to purchase at the same rate as a previous customer who left the organization.

4 - An organization's employee or service provider spends only 50% of the time spent making a sales presentation to an average individual, meaning they consume half the time they would spend making sales presentations to a new customer compared to a loyal customer. Customer loyalty also means the existence of strong reference groups for organizations and their services. These customers talk to their friends and relatives about the organization's services and benefits, making them marketers of the organization's services and products without incurring any marketing or advertising costs for the organization(14) .

5 - Customer loyalty is more important in the service sector than in the goods sector. This is due to customers' awareness that the higher switching costs in the services sector are higher than switching costs in goods. Furthermore, the service delivery process creates more opportunities for personal communication and interaction between the customer and the institution or service provider.

6. Finally, loyalty has become one of the most widely used marketing terms, as it is one of the most important keys to the success of marketing programs. If the customer is the center of the marketing process, then customer loyalty is one of the organization's priorities and its highest ambition. This increased interest in loyalty is due to competition, both locally and globally. Competition has become more fierce, making it more difficult to acquire new customers. Therefore, loyalty today represents the golden rule for measuring the quality of the relationship. True loyalty lasts longer and is evidence of customer satisfaction with the organization's products. Achieving loyalty means that the organization has served the customer's interests, which increases the strength of the relationship(17) .

### **3. The importance of the research**

The importance of this research lies in the fact that the marketing mix and customer loyalty have become among the most important priorities of service organizations in general, and hotel services in particular.

Hotel services have become an integral part of people's lives today, so the search for quality in these services is one of the basic requirements for most people. This is especially true in light of the intense competition among the various hotel companies in Iraq, coupled with the



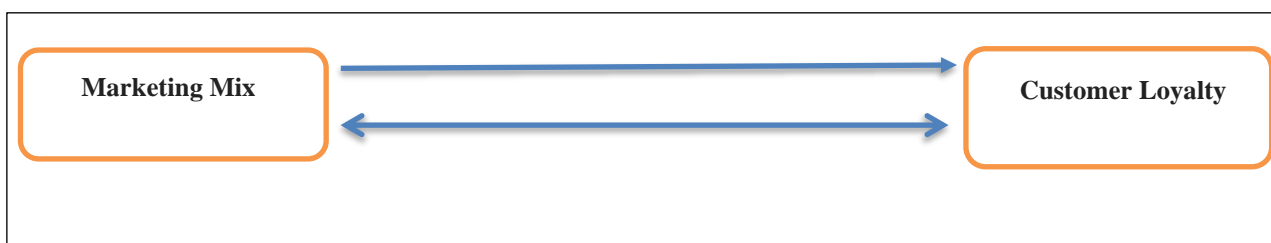
poor services provided in this field. This often leads to customers not meeting their expectations for excellent quality service compared to the price they pay for that service, making it more difficult to achieve customer loyalty.

Through this study, the researcher aims to:

1. Define the marketing mix and its importance.
2. Define the importance of customer loyalty to the organization.
3. Measure the quality of hotel services in the targeted organization.
4. Define the role of the marketing mix provided by the organization in achieving customer loyalty.
5. Develop the necessary results and recommendations derived from the research.

#### **4 - Materials and Methods**

Figure (1) below shows the hypothesis diagram of the research, which refers to the total of the four hypotheses that explain the relationship and effect between the research variables.



**Figure (1) Hypothesis Diagram of the Research**

**H1**–There is statistically significant correlation at  $\alpha = 0.05$  between marketing mix and customer loyalty in the hotel .

**H2**–There is statistically significant effect at  $\alpha = 0.05$  to marketing mix in achieving customer loyalty in the hotel .

#### **5- Results**

##### **A – Study Population and Sample**

The research tried by studying the nature of the relationships between the variables to identify the extent of the correlation and effect between the research variables, and the research targeted a sample consisting of ( 20 ) workers in kaleh factory for dairy products in the holy city of Karbala , as the questionnaire was distributed to the sample members in order to know the level of their opinions and ideas about the variables the research, and the answers were collected from the sample and analyzed statistically through the statistical program SPSS.

##### **B- Reliability and Validity of the Survey Instrument**

The research tool includes (24 items) that depends on two variables, which are marketing mix as an independent variable and includes four dimensions which are (product , price , promotion , and distribution ) and consumer loyalty as a dependent variable and includes four dimensions, which are (Regular\_repurchase, Buy\_other\_products , Willingness\_to\_recommend\_others , and loyalty) .

**Table (1) Descriptive statistics and Reliability for marketing mix's dimensions**

	product	price	promotion	distribution
Mean	1.77	2.05	1.37	1.47
Std. Deviation	.552	.722	.451	.516
.640 : Reliability				

The values in Table (1) above indicate that price obtained the highest mean value of (2.05) and Std. Deviation with a value of (.722), which indicates the importance of this dimension and its high value among respondents in the institution. Followed by the dimension product with value mean and std. Deviation was equal to (1.77) and (.552), respectively. As for measuring the extent of realism and credibility of the dimensions of marketing mix , the Alpha Cronbach index was used, which came with a value of (.640), which is an acceptable percentage as an indicator of the credibility of the questionnaire.

**Table (2) Exploratory Factor Analysis for marketing mix's dimensions**

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.011	50.268	50.268	2.011	50.268	50.268
2	1.047	26.186	76.454	1.047	26.186	76.454
3	.690	17.240	93.694			
4	.252	6.306	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

The results contained in Table (2) refer to the exploratory factor analysis of the Marketing mix's dimensions, which aims to explain the amount of variance and reduce the dimensions to a specific value, as the four dimensions of the Marketing mix were reduced to a single component with a value of (50.268), which explains the variance in the variable. We also note from the above table that the first component has obtained the highest percentage of (2.011) and a variance value of (50.268) , then the second componenet has ( 1.047 ) while the third and fourth component comes with a value of less than one, which means that they cannot be considered as strong components in terms of influence.

**Table (3) Component Matrix for Marketing mix's dimensions**

Dimensions	Component 1
product	.801
price	.645
promotion	.752
distribution	.622

Table (3) shows the percentage of the contributions of each of the four dimensions to the formation of the Marketing mix variable , as product got the highest value of the variable formation with a value of (.801 ) , then came promotion in the second level , while came price and distribution in the third and fourth with values ( .645 ) , ( .622 ) respectively .

**Table (4) Descriptive statistics and Reliability of Customer loyalty's dimensions**

	Regular repurchase	Buy other products	Willingness to recommend others	loyalty
Mean	1.90	1.55	2.45	3.00
Std. Deviation	1.29	.887	1.14	1.41
.395 : Reliability				

The values in Table (4) above indicate that loyalty obtained the highest mean value of (3.00) and Std. Deviation with a value of (1.41), which indicates the importance of this dimension and its high value among respondents in the institution . Followed by the dimension Willingness to recommend others with a value as mean and std. Deviation was equal to (2.45) and (1.14), respectively. While came Regular repurchase and Buy other products in third and fourth place respectively. As for measuring the extent of realism and credibility of the dimensions of customer loyalty , the Alpha Cronbach index was used, which came with a value of (.395 ) , which is an acceptable percentage as an indicator of the credibility of the questionnaire.

**Table (5) Exploratory Factor Analysis of Customer loyalty's dimensions**

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.112	52.791	52.791	2.112	52.791	52.791
2	.854	21.348	74.139			
3	.695	17.379	91.519			
4	.339	8.481	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

The results contained in Table (5) refer to the exploratory factor analysis of the Customer loyalty's dimensions , which aims to explain the amount of variance and reduce the dimensions to a specific value, as the four dimensions of the Customer loyalty's variable were reduced to a single component with a value of (52.791), which explains the variance in the variable. We also note from the above table that the first component has obtained the highest percentage of (2.112) and a variance value of (52.791), also the rest of the components, they had values of less than one, which means that they cannot be considered as strong components in terms of influence.



**Table (6) Component Matrix for customer loyalty's dimensions**

Dimensions	Component 1
Regular repurchase	.741
Buy other products	-.595
Willingness to recommend others	.715
loyalty	.835

Table (6) shows the percentage of the contributions of each of the four dimensions to the formation of the Customer loyalty variable, as the loyalty got the highest value of the variable formation with a value of (.835), then the Regular repurchase dimension came in second place with a value of (.741) , and finally came Willingness to recommend others dimension and Buy other products dimension

### C- Hypothesis testing

**H1**–There is statistically significant correlation at  $\alpha = 0.05$  between marketing mix and customer loyalty in the factory.

**Table (7) corellation between marketing mix and customer loyalty**

		Marketing mix	Customer loyalty
Marketing mix	Pearson Correlation	1	.560
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	20	20
Customer loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.560	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	20	20

It is evident from the results in Table (7) above that there is a positive significant correlation between Marketing mix and Customer loyalty , which was valued at (.560), in addition to that was the value of the sig. ( .010 ) less than 0.05, which means the relationship between the two variables Marketing mix and Customer loyalty is statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and therefore the first hypothesis is accepted.

**H2**-There is statistically significant effect at  $\alpha = 0.05$  to marketing mix in achieving customer loyalty in the factory.

**Table (8) ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.055	1	3.055	8.230	.010b
	Residual	6.682	18	.371		
	Total	9.738	19			

It is clear from the results presented in Table (8) that there is a statistically significant impact of marketing mix in customer loyalty , as the value of sig. was (.010 ) which less than (0.05) and this indicates the accept of the second hypothesis, which refers to there is statistically significant effect at  $\alpha = 0.05$  to marketing mix in customer loyalty .

Table (9) Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.560 <sup>a</sup>	.314	.276	.609	.314	8.230	1	18	.010

Finally, the results presented in Table (9) indicate the total correlation value of the model by considering that marketing mix as independent variable have a correlation with the dependent variable customer loyalty , as the correlation value was positive by (.560) and at a significant level of (.010) ) Which is less than (0.05), which supports the correlation between the research variables, in addition, the value of R. Square indicates the amount of variance that occurs in the value of the independent variable will affect the interpretation of the variance in the dependent variable with a value of (.314).

## 6. Discussion

It is clear from the results contained in the statistical analysis that there is an acceptance of all hypotheses of the research . The two hypotheses were designed in order to identify the nature of the correlation and effect relationships between the two research variables. The first hypothesis indicated that there is a correlation between marketing mix and customer loyalty with a score of (.560), while the level of significance was (.010), which is less than (0.05), so the first hypothesis was accepted.

As for the second hypothesis, it indicated the extent of the impact of marketing mix in achieving customer loyalty, the second hypothesis was accepted because the level of significance (.010) is less than (0.05).

## 7. Recommendations

In this part, the researcher seeks to present a set of recommendations that can be of interest to the dairy factory administration, the research sample in order to achieve the best results in terms of improving performance and achieving positive relations in the field of work:

1. The factory's management must have a marketing plan for the product. This plan must be discussed extensively, be flexible, and take into account the level of demand throughout the year.
2. The factory must pay attention to the general level of prices and income in various market segments, which helps the company increase its market share.
3. Price is an important tool in competing with other organizations. It allows for high flexibility in adjusting prices based on customer income levels. Therefore, the company must

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use modern methods in pricing its products, taking into account the customer's and competitors' positions.

4. The factory conducts adequate advertising campaigns by having qualified individuals present the company's products and their specifications and features compared to other products, using scientific and practical evidence in organizations characterized by high population density, such as schools, institutes, conferences, seminars, and other venues.

5. Since employees play a major role in producing and delivering products and distinguishing themselves from other organizations, the factory must take care of their employees by increasing salaries and incentives, enrolling them in training courses, and attracting the best and most distinguished employees for the mutual benefit of the factory, its employees, and its customers.

6. Market interest in the product and understanding the reasons behind its weak customer impact. This is achieved by offering products with specifications and quality that satisfy customer tastes and meet or exceed customer expectations. This ensures the continuity of the relationship between the two parties. This includes keeping pace with modern technology, showcasing well-known brands, and gathering customer feedback and measuring their satisfaction levels to enhance the strengths and address the weaknesses of the products offered.

7. Providing customers with all information related to the product and its quality, and ensuring that the product is protected from damage by meticulous packaging and conveying to them the market's determination to win their favor and meet their needs.

8. Evaluating pricing policies, focusing on discount strategies, and attempting to convince customers of the value of the price they will pay based on the value and quality of the product they will receive. Setting prices that are appropriate for different income levels sets the market apart from competitors and has a positive impact on enhancing customer loyalty.

9. Markets consider the elements of the marketing mix as an important and influential factor for success, achieving a competitive advantage, and enhancing customer loyalty.

10. Decision makers and marketers are increasingly aware of the importance of customer loyalty, as it is the primary source of market survival, increased sales, and profit. It also represents a source of free promotion for the market through talking to family and friends about the market and its products.

11. Providing a research and development center to design new products that are acceptable to the market and to work to provide products that meet market requirements. Additionally, it is necessary to rely on marketing research to understand consumer trends and desires.

12. Factory management must ensure that sufficient stock of products is available in every location where consumers are expected to inquire about the product. This can be achieved through widespread distribution or by developing a distribution strategy that ensures this.

13. Collaborate with specialized international and regional organizations to leverage their capabilities and expertise in designing and implementing advanced training programs that keep pace with global developments.

14. Reducing production costs by introducing advanced machinery and equipment and exploring local resources for raw materials to control product prices.

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15. Focus on more persuasive and influential promotional methods for consumers, such as television and newspaper advertising, and strive to participate in international exhibitions to promote its products globally.

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