

Investigating the Effect of Marketing Mix Elements on Visitor Satisfaction in UNESCO-Recognized Tourist Attraction Places in a Developing Nation: Exploring the Mediating Role of Service Process

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Abstract *This study investigates how various marketing mix components influence tourists' satisfaction at UNESCO-recognized attractions in a developing country, emphasizing the mediation effect of the service process. Data gathered from 564 tourists through a convenience sampling technique was analyzed utilizing structural equation modeling. The results indicate that the marketing mix's product and distribution aspects directly and indirectly, impact tourist satisfaction. Additionally, the service process significantly mediates this relationship. Conversely, pricing and promotion were discovered to have a limited direct effect on satisfaction, although promotion did have an indirect impact. The research emphasizes that enhancing the service experience mainly through an effectively structured service process can improve visitor satisfaction. It also highlights the need to concentrate on product and distribution factors, recommending digital marketing strategies, such as virtual advertising, to engage a wider audience. While pricing strategies are not as critical for boosting satisfaction, they should still correspond to visitor expectations. This research adds to the marketing and tourism literature by stressing the importance of service processes in mediating the link between the marketing mix and tourist satisfaction within a developing country framework.*

Keywords: *Product, Price, Promotion, Service Processing, Tourist Satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

For developing nations, tourism is essential because it promotes economic expansion and cultural understanding. The historical, environmental, and cultural significance of UNESCO-recognized destinations makes them particularly appealing. Sustainability depends on ensuring visitor satisfaction. Thus, this study examined the mediating role of the service process on the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction at UNESCO sites. It seeks to give insightful information to stakeholders, legislators, and marketers.

Academics agree that return visitors tend to stay longer, be more satisfied, and share positive feedback compared to first-time visitors (Adam et al., 2023; Aktan et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2020). Satisfaction is linked to every marketing mix component (Moynul Hasan & Mohammad Islam, 2020; Thabit & Raewf, 2018), and research shows that marketing and service quality impact visitor satisfaction (Ardani, 2021; Azhar et al., 2019). Effective marketing strategies and attention to customer service are essential for high satisfaction (Kusumawati & Sri Rahayu, 2020; Othman et al., 2021). Understanding the service process and customer interactions is key to ensuring satisfaction. A thriving

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tourism sector fosters repeat customers, which can lower marketing costs and enhance economic benefits (Dwyer, 2022). Acharya et al. (2023) also discovered that improving the satisfaction and experiences of travelers should be the focus.

Tourism has become a key economic sector in many developing countries, driven by improved living standards, job creation, and industry growth (Brătucu et al., 2017; Dwyer, 2022). It boosts GDP and economic development, offering countries like Ethiopia a competitive labor cost advantage (UNWTO, 2023). With a rich archaeological and paleontological history, Ethiopia boasts UNESCO-recognized heritage sites. Tourism is now seen as a tool for long-term development, contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction.

In the past five years, Ethiopia has only drawn a small number of tourists despite its potential in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hussen, 2021). Abate (2019) also claims that the marketing tactics have not been successful despite the industry's fast growth. Moreover, Biazen and Nilsson (2010) revealed that the Ethiopian Tourism Authority and its representatives needed to do more marketing and follow up on the irregularities brought up by travelers. Furthermore, the methodology and model differences can be primarily blamed for inconsistencies across empirical investigations. Schwartz-Shea et al. (2015) support that model selection, research methods, and the variety and ability of measuring instruments can all contribute to these discrepancies.

To further explore the relationships between different parameters and visitor satisfaction, the majority of research usually uses regression analysis (e.g., Azhar et al., 2019; Brătucu et al., 2017; Moynul Hasan & Mohammad Islam, 2020; Thabit & Raewf, 2018). However, the common incapacity of this approach to examine the structures involved simultaneously may be solved by structural equation modeling (Hair, 2016; Schwartz-Shea et al., 2015). Although these effects have been the subject of numerous studies, none have looked at the service process as a mediating element from a theoretical perspective. Thus, this research uses a structural equation model to examine the impact of marketing mix elements on tourist satisfaction, with the service process as a mediating factor.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Framework

Businesses can employ the seven different instruments (7PS) identified by the marketing mix theory for services to affect the behavior of their customers (Anitsal et al.,

2012; Kotler et al., 2014; Moynul Hasan & Mohammad Islam, 2020). Neil Borden initially presented the marketing mix concept in his 1953 article, the idea of the marketing mix. According to Khorshed et al. (2020), this framework covers product, price, distribution channel, personal selling, promotions, packaging, presentation, maintenance, physical management, research, and evaluation.

Kotler et al. (2014) introduced the classic 4Ps of marketing—product, price, distribution, and promotion—while an extended version includes people, physical evidence, and process for service marketing. These elements are interrelated and essential for successful marketing strategies. Effective customer-oriented marketing strategies are critical for tourism businesses (Febrina et al., 2021). Customer satisfaction is key in tourism, as it influences perceptions and builds a positive image (Arismayanti et al., 2022; La & Yi, 2015; Chand et al., 2016). Kotler and Keller (2006) define the marketing mix as controllable variables that meet target market needs.

According to Dolnicar and Ring (2014), tourist products combine material and immaterial experiences, primarily emphasizing client happiness. Price necessitates an awareness of its symbolic meaning, influencing the product (Kotler, 2014), whereas place pertains to market coverage and distribution methods. Target market outreach and persuasion tactics are part of promotions (Kotler et al., 2014). Thus, the four Ps influence how marketing meets customers' needs (Ardani, 2021; Jahmani et al., 2023; Moynul Hasan & Mohammad Islam, 2020). Researchers who want to comprehend the complex dynamics of the marketing mix, service processes, and visitor happiness can build a theoretical framework on these findings.

Relationship between the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix and Tourists' Satisfaction

Studies show that marketing mix elements significantly enhance customer (Ardani, 2021; Azhar et al., 2019; Jahmani et al., 2023; Khorshed et al., 2020; Moynul Hasan & Mohammad Islam, 2020). Jahmani et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of the marketing mix in hotel guest satisfaction, while Nonthapot and Thomya (2020) found that the 4Ps (product, price, promotion, process) impact tourist demand in areas like life experience and recreation. Product quality is crucial for satisfaction (Syariful & Untung, 2020), with Bancin et al. (2022) and Dolnicar and Ring (2014) confirming its strong influence on visitor satisfaction.

Abdullah (2024) found that pricing aligned with visitors' expectations boosts satisfaction, while Veta Lidya Delimah Pasaribu (2023) argued price has no significant impact. Tourist attractions and facilities positively affect visitor satisfaction (Arismayanti et al., 2022). Place attachment

influences satisfaction and word-of-mouth, with place satisfaction being a stronger predictor of residents' decisions (Rastbod & Aflatounian, 2018; Chen & Dwyer, 2018). Promotion and service space positively impact satisfaction and revisit intentions (Hanifah et al., 2022). The following hypotheses were formulated in light of the above-given justifications:

H1: The product directly and significantly affects tourist satisfaction at tourist attractions.

H2: Price directly and significantly affects tourist satisfaction at tourist attractions.

H3: The place directly and significantly affects tourist satisfaction at tourist attractions.

H4: The promotion directly and significantly affects tourist satisfaction at tourist attractions.

Relationship between the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix and Service Processing

Service providers should adopt a customer-oriented competitive advantage through a compelling marketing mix (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021) to build long-term customer relationships (Nonthapot & Thomya, 2020; Othman et al., 2021). Tourist experiences influence visitors' intentions, and Xie (2020) found that promotion helps people gain product knowledge. An et al. (2022) noted that tourists often engage in activities quickly based on information from social media, bypassing the need for further identification.

Acharya et al. (2023), Adam et al. (2023) and Aktan et al. (2022) also discovered that companies should improve their brand image and promote dynamic, creative ideas to increase sales and execute modern marketing strategies successfully in the service process. Tourism organizations may make the most of their trademarks by facilitating interactions between visitors and the brand. Moreover, Chen and Dwyer (2018) argue that a place is a cumulative archive of personal experiences unrelated to specific locations, while regions are collective institutional structures. The explanations given above lead to the development of the following hypotheses:

H5: The product directly and significantly affects the service processing of tourist attractions.

H6: The price directly and significantly affects the service processing of tourist attractions.

H7: The place directly and significantly affects the service processing of tourist attractions.

H8: The promotion directly and significantly affects the service processing of tourist attractions.

The Mediating Role of Service Processing between the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix and Customer Satisfaction

A simple service process enhances customer satisfaction through fast and easy delivery (Kotler et al., 2014). Travelers often choose destinations based on others' experiences (Kumail et al., 2022). The service process should be practical and user-friendly, as tourism services are produced and consumed simultaneously (Zeithaml et al., 2018). With destinations competing on experiences, managing the visitor process is challenging. Improving services leads to higher guest satisfaction, better perceptions, and meeting expectations (Adebayo & Adedeji, 2019; Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). According to Trimurti and Utama (2021), the theory of the goodness of fit is that a tourist destination's ability to satisfy visitors depends on how well it lives up to their expectations. When tourists tend to be fulfilled by their expectations, good service experience, and satisfaction, they will have a stronger intention to revisit a destination. These findings demonstrate that the marketing mix and service quality within the service process substantially impacts visitor satisfaction. The following hypotheses were developed in light of the above justifications:

H9: Product has an indirect effect on customer satisfaction via Service processing.

H10: Price has an indirect impact on customer satisfaction via Service processing.

H11: Place has an indirect effect on customer satisfaction via Service processing.

H12: Promotion has an indirect impact on customer satisfaction via Service processing.

The Relationship between Service Processing and Tourist Satisfaction

Service dimensions should be ensured for customer satisfaction (Aruan & Kusumawardani, 2019).

The hotel guests' perception and experience positively influence their satisfaction with waiting for hotel services (Adebayo & Adedeji, 2019). Moreover, studies show adequate procedures and knowledgeable service personnel greatly influence positive transaction experiences and customer satisfaction (Kusumawati & Sri Rahayu, 2020; Uzir et al., 2021). Customer comfort and happiness are enhanced by a simplified, quick, and easy-to-use process (Dibb & Pride, 2019). Moreover, service quality plays a vital

role in tourism by increasing the level of tourist satisfaction (Aruan & Kusumawardani, 2019; Astuti & Dewi, 2022; Azhar et al., 2019; Dibb & Pride, 2019; Raboti, 2013). The following hypothesis was established following the above explanations:

H13: Service processing has a direct and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS OF A STUDY

Descriptive and explanatory research designs were used in this study to assess demographics, descriptive statistics, skewness, and kurtosis of variables and to examine the relationship between product, price, place, promotion, and tourist satisfaction using the service process as a mediator. Ethiopian most popular tourist destinations were investigated, which are known in their cultural, historical, and natural significances, including the Simien Mountains National Park (registered in 1978), the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela (registered in 1978), and the Fasil Ghebbi (castle) in Gondar (registered in 1979). Data was gathered from visitors who came to the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela for their historical value rather than their spiritual significance. The investigation viewed them as a historical heritage site rather than a place of worship. A cross-sectional survey was employed, and a convenience sampling technique was used due to logistical challenges and accessibility issues. Cochran's (1977) formula helped determine a representative sample size from an infinite population.

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

In this formula, n represents the sample size, z is the critical value, p is the estimated proportion of the population, q is calculated as $1-p$, and e denotes the desired margin of error. Consequently, for a population proportion of 0.5, an infinite population size, and a z -value of 1.96 corresponding to a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 4%, the required sample size is approximately 600. In this instance, the researchers aim to increase the sample size by reducing the margin of error, thereby achieving a larger and more precise sample.

$$600.25 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1 - 0.5)}{0.04^2}$$

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from tourists at attractions, designed to reduce common method biases, as per Podsakoff et al. (2012). The cover page ensured confidentiality and anonymity; questions were grouped for clarity. Of 600 distributed questionnaires, 564 were completed, yielding a 94% response rate. Participants were approached beforehand, and the study's purpose and confidentiality were explained verbally. Informed consent was obtained, allowing for immediate clarification of questions, which was efficient for time-constrained settings.

The questionnaire used in this study incorporated scales slightly modified from previous research to measure the variables related to product, price, place, promotion, service process, and tourist satisfaction. These variables were grouped into six categories, drawing on established literature (Abate, 2019; Magatef, 2015; Rahman & Sultana, 2019; Uzir et al., 2021). All items in the questionnaire were reflective indicators, meaning they represent manifestations of the underlying constructs being measured. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was employed to score responses for each item. Data analysis for the study was done using SPSS-Amos version 26.0 and covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate validity and reliability, while structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test hypotheses (Hair, 2016).

DATA RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The study surveyed 564 tourists who visited UNESCO-listed destinations in Ethiopia. The demographic data showed that 55% of respondents were men, while 45% were women. The majority (30.5%) were aged 26-33, followed by 27% aged 18-25, 21.6% aged 34-41, 11.7% aged 42-49, and 9.2% aged 50+. Most respondents were single (63.1%), with 34.8% married and 2.2% divorced. Regarding education, 63.7% had undergraduate degrees, and 28.9% had master's degrees or higher. Concerning income, 40.6% earned \$100 or less monthly, followed by those making \$100 to \$500 (23.4%) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n= 564)

Demographic Profile	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	310	55
	Female	254	45
Age	18-25	152	27.0
	26-33	172	30.5
	34-41	122	21.6
	42-49	66	11.7
	50 & above	52	9.2
Educational Qualification	Masters and above	161	28.5
	First degree	352	62.4
	Diploma holder	30	5.3
	Certificate holder	6	1.1
	Grade 12 completed and below	15	2.7
Marital Status	Married	196	34.8
	Single	352	62.4
	Divorced	16	2.8
Income Level	\$ 100 or less	226	40.1
	\$ 101 - 500	132	23.4
	\$ 501-1000	60	10.6
	\$ 1001-1500	34	6.0
	\$ 1501-2000	40	7.1
	\$ 2000 or more	72	12.8

Source: Own survey data, 2024.

Descriptive Statistics, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Variables

Skewness and kurtosis were analyzed to assess data normality. For sample sizes over 300, normality is determined

by specific skewness and kurtosis thresholds. According to Byrne and van de Vijver (2010) and Hair (2016), normality is not assumed if skewness exceeds ± 2 or kurtosis exceeds ± 7 . Table 2 shows that none of the variables exceeded these limits, confirming that the data follows a normal distribution.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Variables (n=564)

Variables	Items	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD/ σ	Grand Mean
Product	Pr1	-1.242	1.427	4.22	.872	4.11
	Pr2	-1.066	.923	4.20	.845	
	Pr3	-1.019	.690	4.16	.880	
	Pr4	-1.171	1.145	4.18	.905	
	Pr5	-.953	.779	3.94	.914	
	Pr6	-.872	.561	3.94	.904	
Price	Pri1	-0.54	-0.48	3.95	0.827	3.85
	Pri2	-0.82	0.69	3.94	0.87	
	Pri3	-0.677	0.4	3.86	0.872	
	Pri4	-0.428	0.15	3.77	0.887	
	Pri5	-0.407	0.132	3.67	0.872	
	Pri6	-0.614	0.229	3.88	0.829	
Place	D1	-0.732	-0.313	3.88	1.049	3.86
	D2	-0.645	-0.357	3.78	1.067	
	D3	0.949	0.31	3.94	1.032	
	D4	-0.667	-0.414	3.8	1.065	
	D5	-0.75	-0.418	3.89	1.088	
Promotion	Pro1	-0.767	0.034	4.02	0.939	3.85
	Pro2	-1.153	1.137	4.13	0.941	
	Pro3	-0.853	0.085	3.88	1.061	
	Pro4	-0.499	0.089	3.36	0.915	
	Pro5	-0.803	0.235	3.84	1.011	

Variables	Items	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD/ σ	Grand Mean
Service Process	Proc1	-0.995	0.521	4.12	0.928	4.04
	Proc2	-0.931	0.523	4	0.938	
	Proc3	-0.954	0.85	3.98	0.914	
	Proc4	-1.11	1.253	4.12	0.911	
	Proc5	-0.766	-0.059	3.99	0.929	
Tourist Satisfaction	Sat1	-1.277	1.466	4.21	0.874	4.28
	Sat2	-1.744	3.08	4.46	0.817	
	Sat3	-1.178	0.907	4.15	0.965	
	Sat4	-1.273	1.581	4.24	0.849	
	Sat5	-1.518	2.463	4.32	0.872	

Source: Own Survey Data, 2024.

Furthermore, the data was described using the mean and standard deviations. Table 2 shows that visitor satisfaction had a high grand mean of 4.28, indicating a majority of respondents were pleased with tourist destinations. The product and the service process had a grand mean of 4.11 and 4.0, respectively, indicating a considerable impact on tourist satisfaction. Price, promotion, and place also had moderate grand mean values.

Sampling Adequacy and Variable Relationships

Table 3 presents two key statistics for assessing data suitability for factor analysis: Bartlett’s test of sphericity (measuring relationships) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (assessing sample adequacy).

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

KMO and Bartlett’s Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.921
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9427.911
	df	496
	Sig.	.000

Source: Own Survey Data, 2024.

This study’s KMO value of 0.921 indicates strong sample adequacy, exceeding recommended standards. Bartlett’s test of sphericity showed a significant p-value of 0.000, confirming substantial relationships among variables and validating the data for principal component analysis (PCA).

Common Method Bias

There is no common method bias in the data, as the variance explained by one component is 30.04%, below the 50% threshold. Six components had eigenvalues over 1, explaining 65.24% of the cumulative variance, confirming the data’s suitability for further analysis (see Table 4).

Table 4: Common Method Bias

Total Variance Explained							
Components Total	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	
1	9.612	30.037	30.037	9.612	30.037	30.037	5.645
2	3.026	9.457	39.494	3.026	9.457	39.494	5.277
3	2.611	8.158	47.652	2.611	8.158	47.652	5.530
4	2.213	6.915	54.568	2.213	6.915	54.568	5.465
5	2.097	6.554	61.122	2.097	6.554	61.122	5.160
6	1.319	4.122	65.244	1.319	4.122	65.244	6.832
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.							

Source: Own Survey Data, 2024.

Assessment of the Measurement Model

Reliability and Validity of the Study

CFA was used to evaluate the measuring scales' validity and reliability. All of the variables in this study had coefficient alpha values above 0.8 and values above 0.60, which were

regarded as reliable (Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010; George & Mallery, 2016; Hair, 2016). Every item has a loading value of more than 0.6, which is a good benchmark. All constructs had AVE values above 0.50, confirming convergent validity and guaranteeing the measuring model's discriminant and convergent validity (Hair, 2016) (see Table 5).

Table 5: Measurement Model

Variables	Items	FL	CR	Alpha	AVE
Product	Pr1	.75	.839	.839	.511
	Pr2	.70			
	Pr3	.71			
	Pr5	.72			
	Pr6	.70			
Price	Pri1	.77	.876	.885	.542
	Pri2	.72			
	Pri3	.71			
	Pri4	.70			
	Pri5	.72			
	Pri6	.79			
Place	D1	.72	.833	.836	.500
	D2	.71			
	D3	.68			
	D4	.71			
	D5	.72			
Promotion	Pro1	.74	.843	.842	.518
	Pro2	.79			
	Pro3	.68			
	Pro4	.69			
	Pro5	.70			
Service Process	Proc1	.72	.804	.804	.507
	Proc2	.71			
	Proc4	.71			
	Proc5	.71			
Satisfaction	Sat1	.73	.846	.846	.525
	Sat2	.77			
	Sat3	.67			
	Sat4	.71			
	Sat5	.74			

Note: Alpha: Cronbach's alpha; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; FL: Factor loading; CR: Composite Reliability.

Source: Own Survey Data, 2024.

The Discriminatory Validity- A Hetero Trait Mono Trait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations

The researcher used the HTMT ratio of correlations to assess discriminant validity, replacing traditional methods

like the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to Henseler et al. (2015), values below 0.85 indicate good discriminatory validity. In this study, all HTMT values were under 0.85 (see Table 6), confirming appropriate discriminant validity.

Table 6: Discriminatory Validity- HTMT Ratio Values

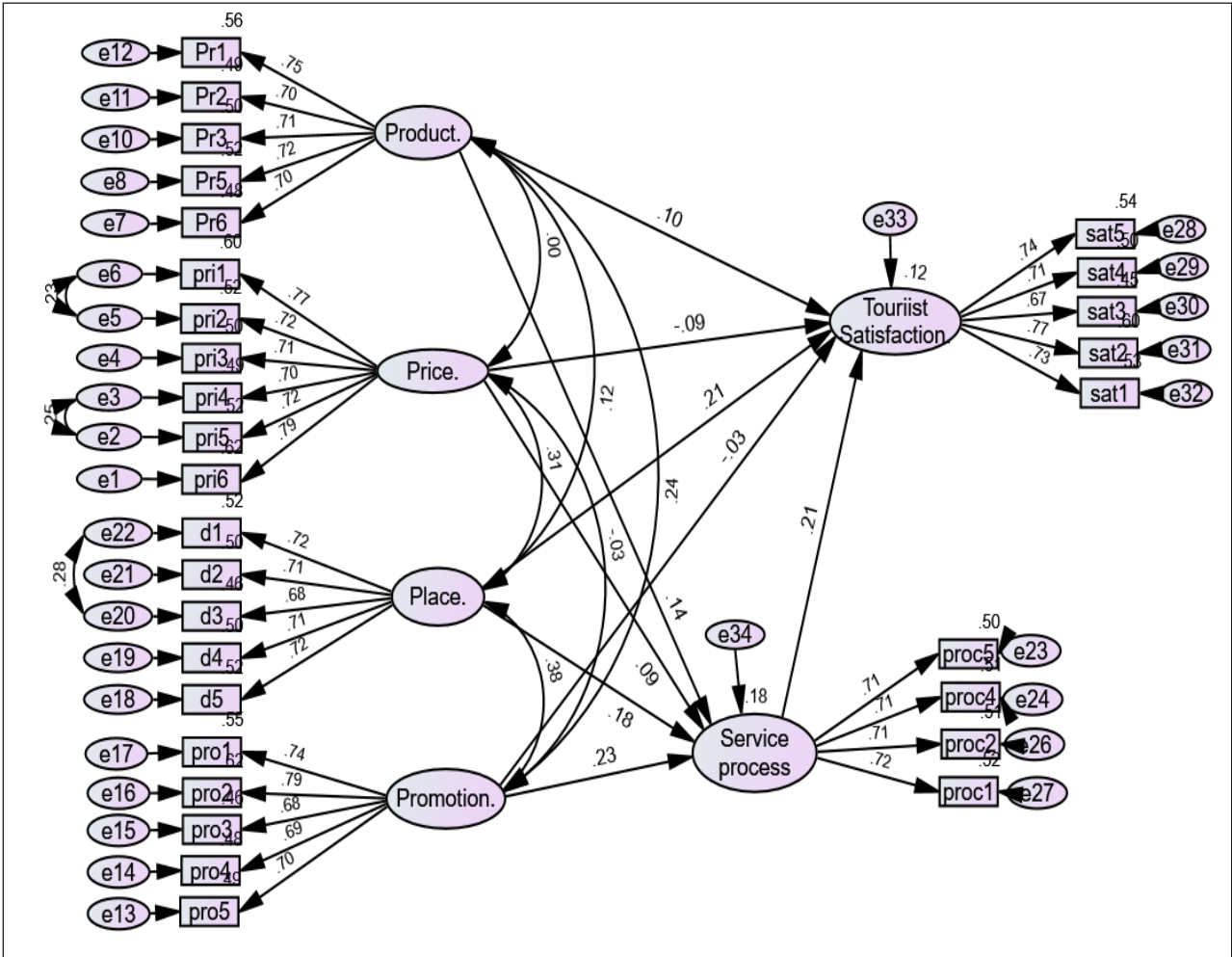
	Price	Product	Promotion	Place	Service Process	Satisfaction
Price						
Product	0.002					
Promotion	0.021	0.247				
Place	0.283	0.125	0.378			
Service process	0.151	0.216	0.335	0.299		
Satisfaction	0.002	0.167	0.164	0.257	0.287	

Source: Own Survey Data, 2024.

Structural Equation Modeling

This study used SEM to examine the measurement construct, structural model, and hypotheses. SEM models verify

relationships between observed variables (Hair, 2016). The evaluation, produced by AMOS, is shown in Fig. 1, with common fit indices used to test the measurement construct and structural model.



Source: Presented by Researchers Using AMOS Software Outputs, 2024.

Fig. 1: Structural Equation Model

The overall fit of the model in this study was deemed satisfactory according to various goodness-of-fit indicators: χ^2/CMIN (DF) = 2.673, TLI (.90), CFI (.905), IFI (.906), SRMR (.0553), PCFI (.855), PNFI (.810), and RMSEA

(.055). Specifically, all these indices surpassed the recommended thresholds, indicating a robust fit of the model to the data.

Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

The SEM model and the routes of relationships between the components are displayed in Fig. 1. Hypothesis testing was done after the final model had satisfied the set requirements.

The research hypothesis testing aims to determine whether the product, price, place, and promotion significantly affect tourist satisfaction through service processing. Based on the outcomes of the data processing with the SEM Amos 26 program is shown in Table 7:

Direct Relationship of Variables

Table 7: Direct Relationship of Variables using SEM-Amos 26

Hypothesis Path		β	S.E.	CR.	P-Value	Results
H1	The Product → Tourist Satisfaction	.104	.050	2.062	.039	Supported
H2	The Price → Tourist Satisfaction	-.089	.041	-1.718	.086	Rejected
H3	The Place → Tourist Satisfaction	.211	.053	3.531	***	Supported
H4	The Promotion → Tourist Satisfaction	-.034	.047	-0.597	.550	Rejected
H5	The Product → Service Processing	.137	.052	2.751	.006	Supported
H6	The Price → Service Processing	.094	.043	1.817	.069	Rejected
H7	The Place → Service Processing	.183	.055	3.104	.002	Supported
H8	The Promotion → Service Processing	.232	.048	4.141	***	Supported
H9	Service Processing → Tourist Satisfaction	.208	.053	3.743	***	Supported

Note: CR>1.96, $p < 0.05$, β = coefficient beta value, S.E.= standard error, CR= critical ratio.

Source: Survey, 2024.

H1 was tested, and the results revealed that the product affected tourist satisfaction of tourist attractions. Therefore, H1 was supported ($\beta = 0.104$, CR-value = 2.062, $p = 0.039$). With a coefficient value of 0.104, the variable product was discovered to be a significant positive predictor of visitor satisfaction. This indicates that for every change in the product, there is an increase in visitor satisfaction of 0.104 units. The findings confirm previous research highlighting product quality affects customer satisfaction (Syariful & Untung, 2020). Similarly, Bancin et al. (2022) described the influence of tourist products on visitor satisfaction, confirming that the nature of the product is a key driver of positive tourist experiences. This suggests that destination managers and attraction operators should prioritize enhancing the quality and appeal of their offerings to improve satisfaction levels.

On the other hand, the price did not directly and significantly affect tourist satisfaction. Thus, (H2) was rejected ($\beta = -0.089$, CR-value = -1.718, $p = 0.086$). It had a negligible impact on visitor satisfaction, with a value of $\beta = -0.089$, meaning that every one-unit increase in price results in a 0.089-unit decrease in visitor satisfaction. These results contradict past research showing that pricing matching visitors' expectations and budget increases their satisfaction (Abdullah, 2024). However, the results of this study align more closely with Veta Lidya Delimah Pasaribu (2023), who also found that price does not have a significant effect on tourist satisfaction, suggesting that, at least in certain contexts, other factors (such as product quality, service

delivery, or the overall experience) may be more influential than the price alone.

Hypothesis (H3) was supported ($\beta = 0.211$, CR = 3.531, $p < 0.001$), showing a significant positive effect of place on tourist satisfaction. For each unit increase in place utility, visitor satisfaction rises by 0.211 units. Studies confirm that place attachment influences satisfaction (Rastbod & Aflatounian, 2018) and residents' word-of-mouth (Chen & Dwyer, 2018). Thus, enhancing a destination's appeal and emotional value can boost satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. However, H4 was rejected as promotion did not significantly affect tourist satisfaction ($\beta = -0.034$, CR = -0.597, $p = 0.550$). These results contradict studies showing that destination image and social media promotion enhance satisfaction (Idris et al., 2024) and that promotions positively impact satisfaction and revisit intentions (Hanifah et al., 2022). Therefore, promotion must be combined with other destination elements to effectively influence visitor perceptions and behavior.

The investigation into H5 showed that the product directly and considerably impacted service processing. Consequently, H5 was accepted ($\beta = 0.137$, CR-value = 2.751, $p = 0.006$). In addition, H7 was put out, and the findings suggested that a place positively impacts the service process. Consequently, H7 was accepted ($\beta = 0.183$, CR-value = 3.104, $p = 0.002$). H8 was further explored, and the results showed that the promotion directly and significantly impacted the service process, which was supported ($\beta = 0.232$, CR-value = 4.141, $p < 0.001$). These results align with previous studies

emphasizing the importance of marketing mix strategies in maintaining long-term customer relationships (Othman et al., 2021). Xie (2020) also highlighted the link between promotion and product knowledge. The findings suggest that a coordinated marketing strategy, integrating product, location, and promotion, can greatly improve service processing.

Hypothesis H6 was rejected as pricing did not directly affect service delivery ($\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.069$). This suggests that pricing alone is not a reliable indicator of service quality, with factors like service quality, customer experience, and product choices having a more significant influence despite price being important in consumer decision-making. Hypothesis H9 shows a significant relationship between service processing and tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.208$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the importance of service quality in

boosting satisfaction. This supports the idea that service quality plays a vital role in tourism by increasing the level of tourist satisfaction (Astuti & Dewi, 2022; Azhar et al., 2019; Dibb & Pride, 2019; Raboti, 2013; Thi et al., 2020). The results stress the need for destination managers and service providers to improve service processes and offer responsive, efficient, and personalized experiences to enhance satisfaction and perceptions of the destination.

Mediation Analysis

This study assessed the mediation role of the service process on the relationship between the 4Ps of the marketing mix and tourists' satisfaction. Observations for partial or non-mediation are made depending on the data collected.

Table 8: Indirect Relationship of Variables Via Service Process

Relationship	β	SE	CR	CI		P	Conclusion
				LB	UB		
Product $\rightarrow$ Service Process $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction (H10)	.029	.013	2.230	.008	.060	.025	Partial Mediation
Price $\rightarrow$ Service Process $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction (H11)	.020	.013	1.538	.000	.040	.124	Non-mediation
Place $\rightarrow$ Service Process $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction (H12)	.038	.016	2.375	.011	.068	.018	Partial Mediation
Promotion $\rightarrow$ Service Process $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction (H13)	.048	.018	2.667	.014	.071	**	Partial Mediation

Source: Own Survey Data, 2023.

Note: β : coefficient beta value; CI: Confidence interval; CR: critical ratio; LB: Lower bound; P: p-value; S.E.: standard error; UB: Upper bound and $P < 0.05$.

The relationship between the 4Ps of the marketing mix and tourist satisfaction was examined through bootstrapping of the indirect effects, revealing essential insights. As shown in Table 8, the bootstrapping results confirm a significant indirect relationship for hypothesis H10, demonstrating that the product influences tourist satisfaction through service processing, with a path coefficient of ($\beta = 0.029$, $CR = 2.230$, $p = 0.025$). This finding supports prior research by Kumail et al. (2022), which highlights that travelers often choose destinations based on others' experiences, and Adebayo and Adedeji (2019), who argue that improving service quality boosts satisfaction, leading to better perceptions and experiences of others. These results highlight the critical role of service quality in shaping overall tourist satisfaction and the indirect influence of product offerings in this context.

Hypothesis H11 was not supported, as the relationship between price and tourist satisfaction through service processing was non-significant ($\beta = 0.020$, $p = 0.124$). This suggests that service processing does not mediate the effect of price on satisfaction, and other factors may influence this relationship. Hypothesis H12 was supported, showing that place significantly impacts tourist satisfaction directly and indirectly through service processes ($\beta = 0.038$, $p = 0.018$). This suggests that a destination's environment and service delivery work together to enhance satisfaction, highlighting

the importance of place appeal and service quality in improving tourist experiences.

The final hypothesis, H13, was supported by the results showing a significant indirect impact of promotion on tourist satisfaction through service processing ($\beta = 0.048$, $CR = 2.667$, $p = 0.01$). This finding indicates that the promotional efforts of a destination or service provider influence tourist satisfaction indirectly by shaping how services are processed and delivered. This result implies that promotional activities can enhance the tourist experience when effectively integrated with service processes. Therefore, tourism marketers and service providers should consider how promotional strategies can be designed to attract visitors and improve service delivery quality, ultimately boosting tourist satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Understanding visitor happiness is critical for sustainable tourism since it determines whether tourists return to a destination. Through the service delivery process in the tourism industry, this study investigated the effect of the 4Ps of the marketing mix on visitor satisfaction. The study revealed that product and distribution significantly impact visitor satisfaction with tourism sites directly and

indirectly. Additionally, the service process strengthened the relationship between product, place, promotion, and tourist satisfaction, which served as a crucial mediator. The results indicate that improving visitor experiences and satisfaction requires a well-designed service procedure. Promotion did not directly affect customer satisfaction, but it did have an indirect effect, and pricing did not significantly affect customer satisfaction either directly or indirectly.

Thus, tourism organizations should concentrate on improving the quality and supply of services to enhance the allure of places. While pricing tactics are not the primary determinant of visitor satisfaction, they should also align with visitor expectations. To reach a wider audience and make a good impression, digital marketing and virtual advertising should be given priority. Prioritizing service quality and integrated marketing can help tourism businesses increase customer satisfaction and cultivate enduring loyalty.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study highlights the importance of understanding the challenges tour guides and operators face in effectively using the 4Ps of marketing. The study's theoretical implications include expanding knowledge on the interaction between product, price, place, promotion, service process, and tourist satisfaction, contributing to tourism and marketing literature. The study's findings can benefit marketers, travel agents, service providers, managers, and researchers by addressing gaps and promoting successful strategies in the tourism industry. According to the study's practical consequences, tourism marketers should use an integrated marketing mix strategy emphasizing tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, this study demonstrates how certain aspects of the marketing mix can be successfully implemented in a developing country.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND DIRECTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides valuable insights, though it has limitations. It only considered tourists' perspectives, excluding the views of managers or employees. Future research should incorporate input from employees and managers to better understand the impact of the 4Ps on visitor satisfaction. Researchers should also focus on tourist hot spots and use more diverse sampling methods, as the convenience sample may not fully represent the population. Additionally, future studies could benefit from a longitudinal approach for deeper insights.

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Data Availability Statement

Data is available upon request from the corresponding author.

Author Contributions Statement

The author, Mr. Arega Enbiale Setegn, contributed to the study's conception, methodology design, data collection, article drafting, analysis and interpretation of the results, manuscript editing, and reference management. In addition, Professor Gurudutta P. Japee gave oversight and direction, revised and edited the manuscript before it was submitted, and helped formulate the methodology and other essential tasks for the study.

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