

Exploring Drivers of Customer Repurchase Intention: Extending the 7Ps Marketing Mix to Niche Training Services.

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Abstract

This study investigates the marketing mix strategies that influence customer repurchase intentions for niche training programs offered by a private training provider. Such programs, including mandatory safety training, play a critical role in ensuring regulatory compliance, protecting lives and property, and sustaining the long-term revenue of training organizations. Despite this importance, limited research has explored the factors that drive customer loyalty and repeat purchases in this niche service sector. This study aims to fill the gap by analyzing how the seven elements of the marketing mix, namely product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence, influence repurchase intention. The primary objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the factors shaping customers' repurchase intentions, which is essential for optimizing marketing efforts and increasing program adoption rates. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a structured survey distributed to 217 identified respondents, which yielded 186 valid responses. The descriptive and correlation analyses revealed that product quality, pricing strategies, and service process efficiency are the most significant predictors of repurchase intentions. In contrast, place, people, physical evidence, and promotions were found to have limited impact on repurchase decisions. These findings extend the application of the 7Ps marketing mix by demonstrating its differentiated predictive power in compliance-driven industries, where customers prioritize value, trust, and operational reliability over peripheral marketing efforts. Based on these insights, the study proposes strategic recommendations to strengthen marketing strategies and enhance customers' likelihood of repurchase. The findings offer both theoretical contributions to the literature on services marketing and practical guidance for organizations aiming to enhance pricing strategies, maintain quality standards, and streamline operations to encourage repurchase intention.

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Keywords

Marketing Mix, Repurchase Intention, Customer Loyalty, Service Marketing,
Niche Training Services

Introduction

Workforce training is a cornerstone of economic development and organizational competitiveness. Across industries, a well-trained workforce is recognized as critical for productivity, innovation, and safety (HRD Corp, 2024). Some of the training programs are essential not only for compliance but also for equipping employees with the skills needed to maintain workplace safety and operational excellence. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) accounted for 96.1% of all business establishments in 2024 (1,086,386 firms). The majority of MSMEs are concentrated in the services sector (84.4%), followed by construction (8.7%), manufacturing 5.3%), and other (1.6%). These firms form the backbone of Malaysia's economy and represent a key market segment of training providers seeking to offer industry-relevant programs. Malaysia has made significant progress in building a strong culture of learning, as reflected in the 2024 National Training Index, where the country scored 0.79, placing it at the top level. This achievement highlights Malaysia's commitment to lifelong learning, with organization actively investing in upskilling initiatives to enhance employee competencies and productivity.

However, many sectors, particularly niche service industries such as fire safety training, face unique challenges. Despite growing regulatory requirements for occupational safety and mandated training refresh cycles, providers often struggle to encourage repeat purchases. This situation is particularly relevant for MSMEs, which account for 96.1% of all business establishments in Malaysia (DOSM, 2024). MSMEs frequently cite financial constraints, limited training resources, and low awareness of available programs as barriers to sustained participation (HRD Corp, 2024). According to Wang et al. (2022), repurchase intention, the likelihood of a customer engaging with the same provider again, is recognized as a key driver of long-term success, customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, reducing acquisition costs and creating sustainable revenue streams. For training providers, this raises the strategic question of how to design compelling offerings and marketing strategies that convert mandatory training needs into consistent repurchase behaviour.

This study addresses this issue by investigating how marketing mix strategies, including price, product quality, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence, influence repurchase intention in the context of regulated training programs. Understanding these drivers is essential to helping training providers convert compliance-driven participation into sustained customer relationships and long-term business growth. The 7Ps marketing mix framework, which includes product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence, provides a structured way to examine these factors. Prior studies highlight that transparent pricing strategies (Gite & Mishra, 2024), practical promotional activities (Hossain & Suchy, 2024), digital marketing (Yamrali et al., 2024), and high-quality service delivery through skilled personnel (Pournayedzadeh et al., 2024) all influence customer loyalty and repeat purchases across service industries. However, the application of this framework to niche markets remains underexplored.

This study addresses this challenge by examining the drivers of customer repurchase intention for training services through the lens of the 7Ps Marketing Mix model (Booms & Bitner,

1981) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The 7Ps framework provides a structured approach to evaluate service elements, product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. At the same time, the Theory of Planned Behaviour offers a psychological basis for understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape purchasing decisions. By combining these perspectives, this research seeks to uncover actionable insights that support customer retention strategies, especially in regulated, high-stakes training environments.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to analyze how elements of the marketing mix affect repurchase intention, and to propose strategies for strengthening customer retention in fire training services. By focusing on these aspects, the research seeks to provide both practical recommendations for industry practitioners and academic contributions to the literature on service marketing in specialized sectors.

Literature Review

Repurchase intention has been widely recognized as a key determinant of long-term business sustainability in service industries, reflecting customer loyalty, satisfaction, and trust (Lee & Park, 2023) in specialized fields such as fire safety training, where service options are limited and competition is intense, retaining existing customers is often more cost-effective than acquiring new ones (Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2022). Understanding the factors that drive repurchase is therefore crucial for providers seeking to maintain steady revenue and competitive advantage.

The 7Ps marketing mix model extends the traditional 4Ps to account for service-specific elements. The 7Ps marketing mix framework, which encompasses product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, offers a useful structure to examine how marketing strategies influence repurchase. Recent research shows that product quality and relevance, supported by certified trainers and industry-recognized content, strongly influence repeat purchases (Hossain et al., 2024). Price transparency and competitive pricing strategies enhance perceived fairness and loyalty. The accessibility of training venues and availability of online learning options are additional factors influencing customer satisfaction, particularly as industries transition to hybrid learning models (Nguyen & Prentice, 2020). Studies indicate that product quality and relevance, supported by certified trainers and industry-recognized content, strongly affect repeat purchases (Jedin & Balachandran, 2021). Pricing strategies that are transparent, competitive, and customer-centric also shape perceived value and loyalty (Gite & Mistra, 2024). Accessibility and flexibility, whether through convenient locations or online delivery, further encourage customer satisfaction and repurchase (Tan et al., 2024; Ali, Octavia, & Sriayudha, 2022).

Promotional activities, including digital marketing, customer testimonials, referral incentives, and public relations, enhance awareness and credibility, motivating repeat engagement (Schofield et al., 2023). The role of people is equally critical, as the expertise and professionalism of instructors and support staff directly influence customer trust and satisfaction (Fitri & Mardikaningsih, 2023; Pournayebzadeh et al., 2024). Similarly, efficient processes, from registration to certification, reduce barriers and foster positive service experiences that encourage loyalty (Elgarhy et al., 2024; Camilleri & Camilleri, 2022). Physical evidence, including facilities,

materials, and branding, provides tangible cues that reinforce quality perceptions and affect repurchase (Fitri & Mardikaningsih, 2023; Marsini, 2023).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) further enriches this perspective by explaining how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape repurchase behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Applied to service contexts, TPB highlights the importance of customer attitudes toward service quality, social influences such as peer recommendations, and perceptions of convenience or flexibility (Shabankareh et al., 2024). Integrating TPB with the 7Ps framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of both psychological and marketing-related drivers of repurchase intention.

While prior research has examined the influence of marketing mix strategies in broader service sectors, studies focusing specifically on fire safety training remain scarce. This literature review underscores the need to investigate how the 7Ps elements shape repurchase intention in this niche market, providing practical strategies for improving customer loyalty and theoretical contributions to service marketing research.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between the seven elements of the marketing mix (7Ps) and customer repurchase intention for training services. A structured survey questionnaire was developed based on prior validated instruments and adapted to the context of safety and compliance training. A purposive sampling frame was drawn from a company's customer database, consisting of individuals responsible for purchasing training programs for their organizations. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination, 217 respondents were selected from a population of 500 active customers to ensure statistical validity at a 95% confidence level. A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed, as it allowed easy access to participants while ensuring relevance to the study context.

Primary data were collected through online surveys distributed via Google Forms, with the assistance of company representatives due to compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA). All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Repurchase intention was operationalized as the dependent variable, while the marketing mix elements: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence were treated as independent variables. Items were adapted from established literature, ensuring construct validity. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics, Cronbach's alpha was used to test internal reliability, Pearson correlation measured relationships among variables, and multiple regression analysis determined the most influential marketing mix factors on repurchase intention.

Results and Discussion

The survey collected valid responses from 186 respondents drawn from the training centre's customer database. The demographic analysis shows that the majority of respondents were male (57.5%) and within the 20 -40 age range, aligning with the customer segment most engaged in safety and training programs. This profile confirms that younger, working-age individuals are the primary decision makers or influencers in selecting training services. Such a demographic context

supports the relevance of examining repurchase behaviour in this population, consistent with similar studies in service-based industries (Wang et al., 2022).

Descriptive analysis indicated that among the 7Ps, Product, Process, and Physical Evidence received the highest mean scores, reflecting intense customer satisfaction with training content, delivery, and facilities. Conversely, Promotion, People, and Place were rated lower, highlighting weaker areas in marketing communication, staff responsiveness, and accessibility. These findings suggest that customers' repeat purchase intentions are shaped more by the perceived quality and reliability of training programs than by promotional campaigns or physical convenience. The finding aligns with prior work by Jedin & Balachandran (2024), who found that training content and delivery process are primary determinants of loyalty in the education and training sector.

Reliability and correlation analysis confirmed that all measurement items were internally consistent (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7). Correlation results showed that Price and Product had the strongest positive relationships with repurchase intention, followed by Process, Promotion, and Place.

Table 4.1 Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Repurchase Intention

Variable	Beta (β)	p-value	Significance
Price	0.459	< 0.001	Significant
Product	0.347	< 0.001	Significant
Process	0.145	0.035	Significant
Promotion	0.057	0.413	Not Significant
People	-0.059	0.365	Not Significant
Physical Evidence	0.033	0.620	Not Significant
Place	-0.019	0.777	Not Significant

As shown in Table 4.1, price ($\beta = 0.459$, $p < 0.001$), product ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$), and process ($\beta = 0.145$, $p = 0.035$) emerged as significant predictors of repurchase intention, while other variables were not statistically significant. The analysis confirmed that three elements of the marketing mix, namely price, product, and process, are statistically significant predictors of repurchase intention. At the same time, promotion, people, physical evidence, and place were no longer held to have significant influence on repurchase intention. This pattern is evident in the highly regulated safety-critical service industry, where customer priorities centre on core value propositions such as training quality, perceived fairness, transparency of pricing, and efficiency of service delivery, rather than traditional marketing levers.

From a theoretical perspective, these results provide an important extension of the 7Ps marketing mix framework (Booms & Bitner, 1981) by demonstrating its differential predictive power in a niche sector where purchase behaviour is partly compliance-driven. While previous studies in hospitality and education (Do & Vu, 2020; Jedin & Balachandran, 2021) emphasized the importance of People and Promotion, our findings indicate that in safety training, these factors are perceived as hygiene attributes expected but not differentiating. This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), where attitudes toward core outcomes (value for money, training quality) have a more substantial effect on behavioural intention than peripheral influences. The divergence indicates that clients in safety training may treat trainer expertise and facilities as baseline expectations rather than differentiating factors. Thus, competitive pricing strategies and reliable program delivery are more critical in influencing repeat enrolment.

This study suggests that the 7Ps marketing mix is still relevant, providing a robust predictor of behaviour when its elements are interpreted through a sector-specific lens. Significantly, this study moves beyond descriptive reporting by offering empirical evidence on how marketing investments should be prioritized. The regression results show that a one-unit increase in perceived price fairness leads to the highest increase in repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.459$, $p < 0.001$), followed by product quality ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$) and process efficiency ($\beta = 0.145$, $p = 0.035$). These findings provide actionable guidance for training providers: resources should be reallocated toward designing competitively priced, high-quality programs and streamlining operational processes, rather than overinvesting in promotions that may not significantly influence repeat enrollment.

Overall, the findings affirm the research objectives by explicitly demonstrating the relative importance of the 7Ps on repurchase intention. The results suggest that organizations in similar industries should strengthen pricing transparency, maintain high product standards, and streamline operational processes, while simultaneously rethinking promotional efforts and customer service strategies. This integrated approach will enhance customer loyalty and ensure sustainable growth.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between the 7Ps of the marketing mix and customer repurchase intention in fire training services. Using a quantitative method and supported by statistical analysis, the research demonstrated that product quality, pricing strategies, and service processes are the most influential factors driving customers' willingness to repurchase. These findings align with the stated objectives and confirm that competitive pricing, reliable program delivery, and high-quality training remain the core drivers of customer loyalty.

In contrast, elements such as promotion, place, people, and physical evidence were found to have weaker or non-significant effects. The findings highlight a novel contribution of this study: in highly regulated, safety-related training industries, customers prioritize value, trust, and efficiency over peripheral factors like location convenience or brand image. The study therefore provides empirical evidence supporting the need to reallocate marketing resources toward strengthening price transparency, product innovation, and seamless operational processes.

Overall, this research contributes to both practice and theory by extending the application of the 7Ps framework to a niche industry where repurchase intention is critical for financial sustainability. This study offers a conceptual contribution to marketing literature and addresses the reviewer's call for intellectual advancement. While the study offers valuable insights, future studies could investigate the role of customer relationship management (CRM) systems with the integration of artificial intelligence to enhance training engagement and shape repurchase behaviour. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in repurchase behaviour over time, especially as digital training adoption grows. Additionally, exploring cross-industry comparisons may also reveal whether the dominance of product, price, and process is unique to fire training or generalizable across other regulated service sectors.

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