Marketing Mix Strategies and Their Relationship with the Service Orientation of Community Pharmacies in Thailand

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ABSTRACT
This research has examined the marketing mix strategies and their relationship with the service orientation of community pharmacies in the region of Thailand. To address this objective, a questionnaire was developed and distributed among the different members who are currently serving in community pharmacies of Thailand. with the help of 7 team members, a sample survey with 289 respondents was conducted where the data set of 247 respondents was found statistically good for conducting the descriptive analysis, factor loadings, and finally the structural equation analysis. Descriptive results have shown the overall data trends with the help of mean, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness. Whereas factor loadings are providing the evidence for the individual item's significance in the latent construct. Finally, our results have shown that marketing mix strategies for the pricing, placing and promotion related activities are statistically significant to impact on the mean value of service orientation in the community pharmacies of Thailand. More specifically, the impact of promotion and placing is significantly positive for the service orientation while pricing is showing its adverse impact on service orientation of local pharmacies. However, no impact of product related strategies on service orientation is found. This findings are providing a good insight for the policy making specifically in the pharmaceutical sector of Thailand. Furthermore, students, researchers, and researchers in the field of marketing strategies can reasonably get the proper understanding with the help of present findings. However, our research is confined to a reasonable sample, examining the barriers for the service orientation, and limited regional implications. Future studies are highly recommended to implement this research while taking the stated limitations under their consideration too.

Keywords: Marketing mix, Service orientation, Community pharmacies, Thailand..

INTRODUCTION

To doctors, customers and clinicians, pharma marketing refers to the advertising of drugs and medical strategies by private and public organizations [1]. In the pharmaceutical industry, marketing is a top priority and on drugs an average American spending is around $1000 [2, 3]. In the pharmaceutical industry, marketing is a top priority. Meanwhile, in pharma, most companies show a great part with so much spending on the marketing related activities. Based on the concept of stakeholder value, marketing is now the crucial and powerful force [4-6]. For customer requirements, marketing facilitates the pharma companies to identify and to provide good services based on the customer expectations. On investment, professional marketers are essential to take responsibility for the pharma branding. The pharma industry is developing at a percentage of five which shows a reasonable growth in the world economy [7]. Meanwhile, two main health care sectors like equipment and medical services are also under observation from the context of marketing and related activities.

For every drug, pharma companies spend just about $2.6 billion for the purpose of bringing their products to the market [8]. Contrasting to research and development, most companies apply more on pharma marketing in duration of the general spending. In the current years, companies like Johnson & Johnson consumed more than double of their R&D on marketing related activities. However, pharma companies tend to spend on marketing related activities to serve their customers through an appropriate way. To explain this enormous number, pharma marketers are capable to identify some sufficient reasons. When it would be a time to market their project, most pharmaceutical companies face many challenges. Looking for false claims and attracting litigation the pharmaceutic corporations is highly regulated. In order to attract the attention of prescribing physicians as well as their patients, there are wide range of various pharmaceutical marketing policies.

For fascinating the consideration of prospects, marketing related contents are crucial role players. The viewer desires to see between being excessively promotional and publishing content. To get attention online, social media is widely used by the pharmaceutical companies [9]. By drug manufacturers, newer pharmaceutical marketing strategies are working good for the facilitation of business firms [10, 11]. To market their applies many physicians use social media and are checking social media on regular intervals However, to properly advertise the drugs on social media, it is very much important for the pharmaceutical companies to address the audiences in an appropriate manner because patients also get information online for their health condition and treatments. Being an effective pharmaceutic marketer, consuming a decent link with physicians is another way to get the success in the market. From sales representatives, physicians want to suggest pharmaceutical products to different customers and for this reason, physicians feel a sense of responsibility.

Among various, the four marketing mix components like product, price, place and promotion are playing their big role in the recent time [12]. Meanwhile, marketing promotional channels are also under observation in the literature to explore their significance in determining the overall success structure for the business [15-17]. The key purpose of this research is to examine the influence of marketing mix strategies through 4Ps on the value of service orientation in the local pharmacies of Thailand. The overall

organization of the study indicates that present section has covered some introduction, section two is adding the literature material, section three is providing the details for the variables, section four for research methods, section five for the results and discussion, while last section covers the conclusion and future direct. Figure A below shows the top 10 global medical tourism destination by value in USD millions (2017).
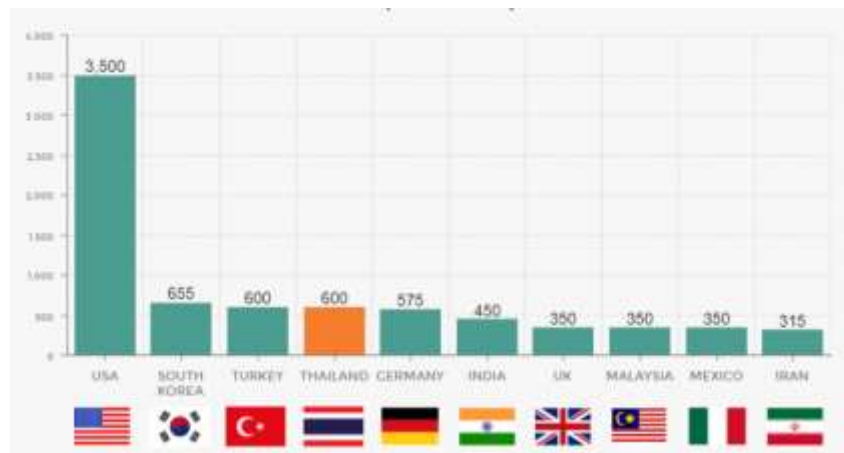

Figure 1: Thailand Medical Tourism Snapshot

LITERATURE REVIEW

A series of literature studies are available, covering the perspective of marketing mix and related strategies in the pharmaceutical industries. For example, it is observed that marketing is an essential component and known as driving force in the pharmaceutical industries [18, 19]. A range of online and physical promotional activities are providing the fact that like any other industry, drug and pharmaceutical sector are primarily dealing with the promotion, placing, pricing and product related strategies [18, 19]. Dickov and Kuzman [20] have widely discussed the concept of marketing mix in the pharmaceutical industry. Authors believe that various products like diagnostics, medical devices, medical supplies and durable medical equipment are known in the pharmaceutical industry. However, it is found that any substance which can produce a psychological or physical change. Besides, different other classes of pharmaceutical products are also discussed by the authors.

[21] explore the marketing mix in the pharmaceutical industry of India along with the policies related to the four Ps. Authors have provided a reasonable evaluation for the marketing mix in the Indian economy where drug and pharmaceutical industries are playing a big role in the health care of the country.[13] Additionally, it is argued that for the Indian economy, pharmaceutical industry is among the most organized firms. Meanwhile, the decision making in all the four Ps of marketing specify the overall management capabilities. Besides, the overall pharma industry in India is under the surveillance of the Government for its smooth functioning and serving in the economy.

Dickov, et al. [17] believe that marketing is like a social manifested process which is working in the market. In the modern world, business firms are working under complex and dynamic market conditions for which organized marketing related activities are very important. Meanwhile, some of the environmental forces needs to be observed because of their significant impact on the business and its Variables of the Study

marketing activities. During the time of last decade, Narayanan, et al. [18] has tested the implication of return on investment for the promotional expenditure in the pharmaceutical industry where the role of marketing mix is also interacted. [14] Authors have stated that pharmaceutical direct advertising to consumers, and sales force are significantly impacting on the demand side. Both of these factors are also integrated with the pricing side of the marketing mix too. Meanwhile, some other implications of the marketing mix in the pharmaceutical industry are also provided by the authors.

Additionally, research work by Akomea and Yeboah [22] have also observed the relationship between the market orientation and firm performance for the different firms working under the shadow of pharmaceutical industry of Ghana. Authors claim that during the time of last decade, the market orientation in the pharma industry of Ghana was below 35 percent. However, in the recent years due to various market forces and economic dynamics the percentage of overall market orientation has been grown to over 50 percent. It is believed that there is a significant relationship between the market orientation. Feletto, et al. [23] have explored the need for the improvement of pharmaceutical services in the community pharmacies. Researchers believe that community pharmacy is an industry undergoing transformation which is basically evolved over time, representing a business capabilities to serve in the marketplace. the key purpose of their study was to explore the need for the key elements as required for the proper serving through community pharmacies. An electronic survey was conducted for the Australian community pharmacies with a total sample of 395. It is believed that planning and performance, process and the people, awareness about the services, and infrastructure plays a significant role in impacting the pharmacy services in Australia.

TABLE A: Description of the Variables

Title of the Variable	Nature of the Variable	Measuring Items	Abbreviation
Marketing Mix			
Product: set of the items as offered and considered by the pharmaceutical industry to its customers and consumers	Independent	P1-P4	P1, P2, P3, P4
Price: indicates the amount charge by the pharmaceutical industry on different products.	Independent	PR1-PR4	PR1, PR2, PR3, PR4
Place: indicates the process or methods used by the business to bring product to its customers.	Independent	PL1-PL4	PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4.
Promotion: all types of activities used by the business to inform or persuade to its customers	Independent	PR1-PR3	PR1, PR2, PR3
Service Orientation			
Service Orientation: specifies the overall designing and delivering the best services to the customers by the business.	Dependent	SEROR1-SEROR4	SEROR1, SEROR2, SEROR3-SEROR4

RESEARCH METHODS

As discussed earlier, our study is based on the primary data. Therefore, a sample survey questionnaire was developed to collect the data from the various respondents. More specifically, we have targeted the various individuals who are working in different local and community based pharmacies. With the help of teammates, our study has initially distributed a sample questionnaire with 289 respondents. However, the collection of these distributed sample has shown that overall 247 questionnaires were those with no missing responses. Hence, it is decided that the stated sample of this research is 247. Meanwhile, our study is based on the provision of descriptive statistics covering the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness respectively. After descriptive results, this study shows the structural input measurement model for the factor analysis (CFA) which indicates the individual significance of each item as covered under the latent construct. By the end, we have applied the structural equation modelling technique where all four Ps; product, price, place, and promotion as known as exogenous variables, and service orientation is added for the endogenous variable of the study. Additionally, it is expressed that all the items of both dependent and independent variables are measured through five point likert scaling tool.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 has provided the descriptive measures with the help of total respondent's data while measuring the mean value, standard error and other values as well. It is observed that for the descriptive statistics mean score indicates the overall mid trends in the data as calculated through five points likert scale in the questionnaire. For marketing related factors, four Ps are observed where P1 indicates the product, PR stands for the price, PL shows the place and PRO provides the information about the core items of promotion in the pharmaceutical business. All the items for these variables are showing different mean score but most of them has a mean value of 3 or near to 3, hence a midpoint average trend under full sample of the study. In addition, service orientation shows the fact that all items have a mean score of above three except for the SEROR3 which is 2.66. Furthermore, our results have shown the value of standard deviation in all the mean scores, with normality measures like kurtosis and skewness accordingly.

TABLE 1: Descriptive Results of all Items

	N	Range	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
P1	247	4.00	3.8583	.07783	1.22315	1.496	-.855	.155	-.282	.309
P2	247	4.00	2.8421	.08671	1.36275	1.857	.056	.155	-1.201	.309
P3	247	4.00	3.0324	.07926	1.24571	1.552	.002	.155	-.907	.309
P4	247	4.00	3.2267	.07647	1.20180	1.444	-.261	.155	-.860	.309
PR1	247	4.00	3.3522	.08435	1.32572	1.758	-.416	.155	-.913	.309
PR2	247	4.00	3.3563	.08181	1.28571	1.653	-.308	.155	-.982	.309
PR3	247	4.00	3.1255	.07940	1.24794	1.557	-.063	.155	-.966	.309
PR4	247	4.00	2.9757	.07844	1.23277	1.520	-.072	.155	-.964	.309
PL1	247	4.00	2.9231	.08447	1.32754	1.762	.069	.155	-1.154	.309
PL2	247	4.00	3.0445	.08893	1.39760	1.953	-.080	.155	-1.302	.309
PL3	247	4.00	3.6437	.08140	1.27937	1.637	-.612	.155	-.757	.309
PL4	247	4.00	3.0931	.08223	1.29235	1.670	-.072	.155	-1.051	.309
PRO1	247	4.00	2.9676	.08641	1.35811	1.844	.049	.155	-1.143	.309
PRO2	247	4.00	3.3603	.07750	1.21797	1.483	-.324	.155	-.874	.309

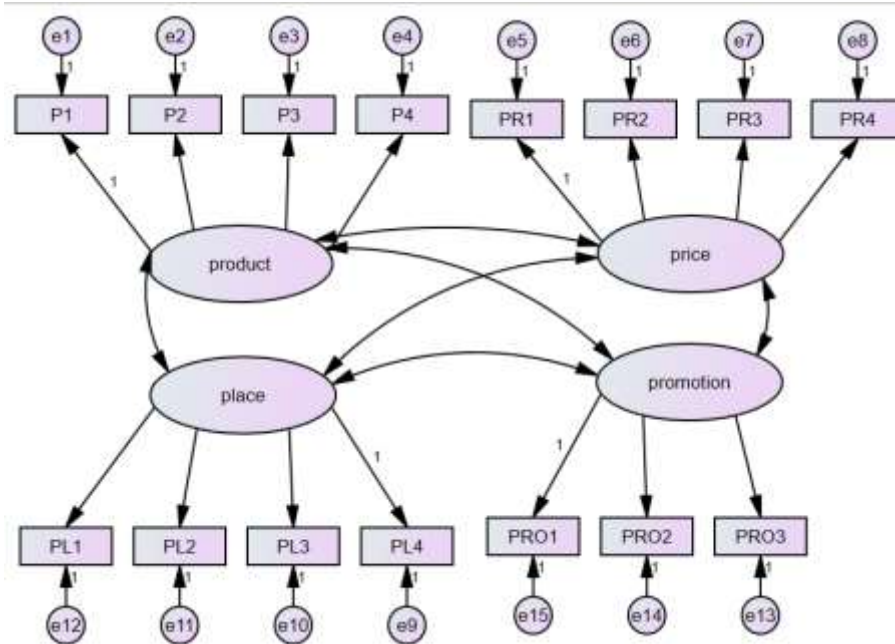| PRO3 | 247 | 4.00 | 3.0121 | .08441 | 1.32666 | 1.760 | -.033 | .155 | -1.179 | .309 |
SEROR1	247	4.00	3.4008	.07880	1.23848	1.534	-.489	.155	-.653	.309
SEROR2	247	4.00	3.4818	.07253	1.13994	1.299	-.411	.155	-.548	.309
SEROR3	247	4.00	2.6680	.08951	1.40669	1.979	.297	.155	-1.159	.309
SEROR4	247	4.00	3.0081	.08234	1.29411	1.675	-.095	.155	-1.015	.309

FIGURE 1. Structural Model for the Marketing Mix

Figure 1 provides the structure model for the product, price, place, and promotion as observed for the four dimensions of marketing mix where product is represented through four items, price is measured through four items, place is reflected through four items, and promotion is reflected with the three items. Meanwhile, all four marketing mix variables are integrated with the double headed arrow along with the separate error terms for each of the items of marketing mix. This model indicates the structural model for the factor analysis as observed through confirmatory factor analysis and results are presented under Table 2 as generated through SPSS-AMOS. Factor loadings are good indicators to check whether the selected items of the study are measuring the main latent construct or not. It is found that P1 has a factor loading of .681, for P2;.890, for P3;.772,

and for P4;880 respectively. Similarly, the factor loadings for PR1, PR2, PR3, and PR4 is .720, .783, .892, and .865 respectively. Additionally, factor loadings for the place items are presenting the score of .711, .722, .774 and .680. Lastly, for the promotion items, we have found the factor loading of .910,.902 and .882 hence the maximum values of the factor loadings under full sample measurement. All these loadings are showing the fact that there is no issue for the loadings, hence may be considered for the next level analysis. Meanwhile, Figure 2 is showing these factor loadings, with the correlation among the estimates and values for the error terms of this study.

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Items	Direction	Variables	Estimate
P1	<---	Product	.681
P2	<---	Product	.890
P3	<---	Product	.772
P4	<---	Product	.880
PR1	<---	Price	.720
PR2	<---	Price	.783
PR3	<---	Price	.892
PR4	<---	Price	.865
PL4	<---	Place	.711
PL3	<---	Place	.722
PL2	<---	Place	.774

Items	Direction	Variables	Estimate
PL1	<---	Place	.680
PRO3	<---	Promotion	.910
PRO2	<---	Promotion	.902
PRO1	<---	Promotion	.882
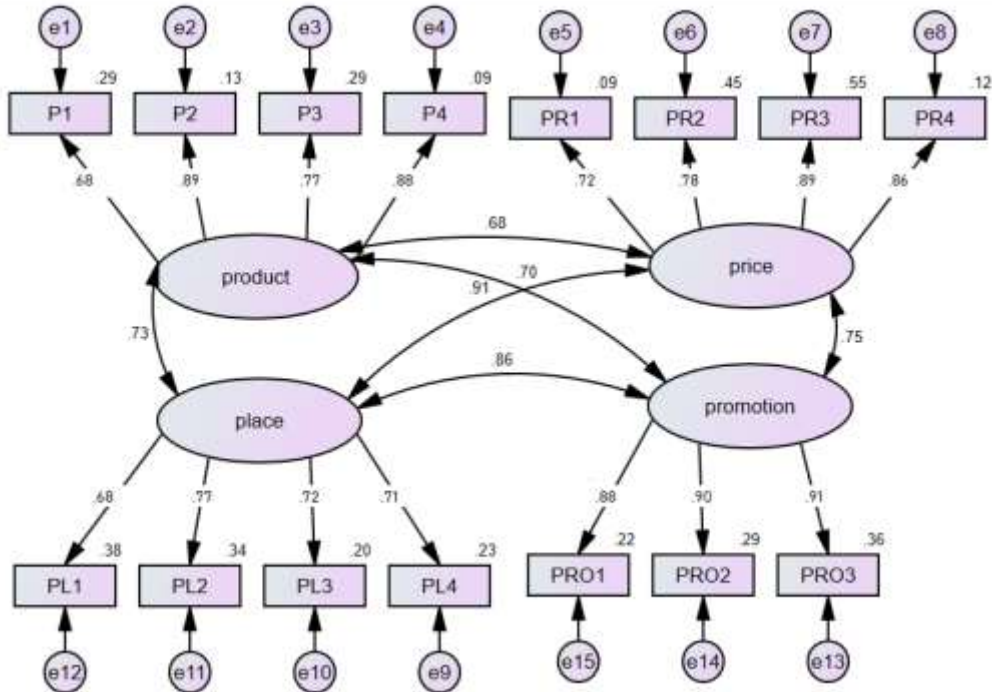
In addition, table 3 has presented the covariance between the variables of the study along with the standard error, critical ration and relative p-values. It is observed that the covariance between eh product and price is .197, between price and promotion is .203, between promotion and place is .347, between place and product is .320, between place and price is .223, and between promotion and product is .321. IT is finally accepted that these values are showing a good understanding regarding the covariance between the estimates along with their p-values.

TABLE 3. Covariances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Product	<-->	price	.197	.057	3.453	***
Price	<-->	promotion	.203	.059	3.432	***
Product	<-->	place	.320	.070	4.543	***
Place	<-->	promotion	.347	.076	4.571	***
Price	<-->	place	.223	.062	3.568	***
product	<-->	promotion	.321	.076	4.244	***

In addition, Table 4 has shown the variances among the variables, and error terms of the study. It is accepted that highest variance is found for the error terms, and lowest in the e20. While product, price, place and promotion latent construct. The value of variance is accepted as the square of the standard deviation under full sample measurement, representing the fact that how far the set of numbers are primarily spread out from the mean/average value.

TABLE 4. Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Variables/error terms	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
product	.512	.131	3.898	***
Price	.163	.075	2.180	.029
Place	.367	.103	3.555	***
promotion	.444	.127	3.498	***

Variables/error terms	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
e20	-.055	.115	-.482	.630
e1	.978	.122	8.047	***
e2	1.664	.158	10.517	***
e3	1.128	.125	9.044	***
e4	1.301	.123	10.547	***
e5	1.588	.147	10.792	***
e6	.893	.105	8.469	***
e7	.705	.098	7.227	***
e8	1.323	.124	10.670	***
e9	1.296	.124	10.417	***
e10	1.264	.122	10.399	***
e11	1.292	.132	9.751	***
e12	1.112	.117	9.508	***
e13	1.191	.132	9.032	***
e14	1.031	.112	9.234	***
e15	1.393	.142	9.793	***
e16	1.030	.117	8.788	***
e17	1.794	.165	10.848	***
e18	1.110	.104	10.655	***
e19	1.100	.112	9.857	***

Addition to the above findings, figure 3 shows the structural model where all marketing mix latent constructs are accepted as main explanatory variables of the study and service orientation is accepted as main endogenous or dependent variable of the study. For the measurement of service orientation,
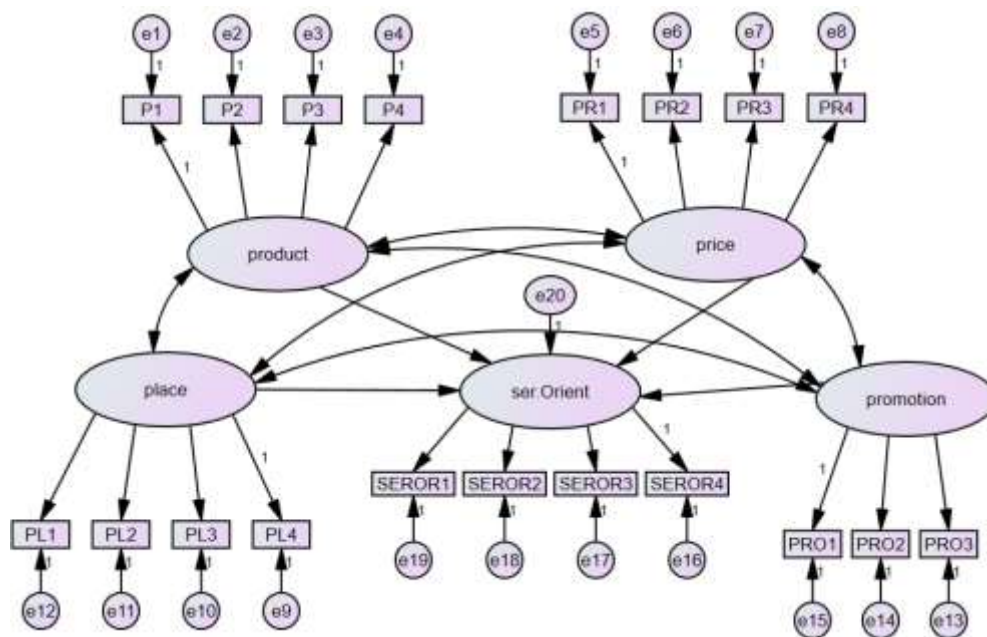
four items like SEROR1, SEROR2, SEROR3, and SEROR4. Meanwhile all the items of each of the latent construct under Figure 3 are showing the error terms and for the service orientation, a sperate error terms of e20 is also added under full model presentation. Meanwhile, for the input structural model in AMOS, it is very important to show a regression weight of 1 for any one of the items for each of the latent construct of the study. For this requirement, P1,PR1, PL4, SEROR4 and PRO1 are showing their regression weights which are finally accepted for the output of structural equation model. The results for the structural model as presented in Figure 3 is presented in the Table 5 of the study which is covering the unstandardized regression weight of the study.

As per the regression findings for the structural model, it is observed that following research hypotheses have been tested and analyzed

H0: From overall factors of marketing mix, product strategies have not significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H1: From overall factors of marketing mix, product strategies have shown a significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H0: From overall factors of marketing mix, pricing strategies have not significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H2: From overall factors of marketing mix, pricing strategies have shown a significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H0: From overall factors of marketing mix, placing strategies have not significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H3: From overall factors of marketing mix, placing strategies have shown a significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H0: From overall factors of marketing mix, promotional strategies have not significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

H4: From overall factors of marketing mix, promotional strategies have shown a significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand

For testing the overall research hypotheses, we have observed the results of structural models as provided under Table 5. The single headed arrow under the following table is presenting the relational impact where our key concern is for the impact of price, promotion, product and place on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand. The coefficient for the Table 5 is -1.354 with the standard error of .490. It means that one unit change in the value of pricing is causing a negative impact on the service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand.

Additionally, the level of significance for this relationship is observed with the critical ration of -2.76 which is significant at 1 percent. It means that pricing is showing a negative but significant impact on service orientation for the community pharmacies. Therefore, our results are definitely supporting the H3 which specifies that "From overall factors of marketing mix, placing strategies have shown a significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand". This impact further explains that pricing strategies are causing an adverse shift in service orientation so more attention is required to control this adverse impact. Moving towards the impact of promotion on service orientation, the coefficient under Table 5 is .333 which means that unit increase in the value of promotional activities is putting a direct impact on service orientation for the community pharmacies in Thailand. This impact is further justifying with the critical ration of 12.90 which indicates a maximum level of confidence to accept H4. Hence our results are accepting the statement that From overall factors of marketing mix, promotional strategies have shown a significant influence on service orientation of community pharmacies in Thailand. For examining the influence of product on service orientation, coefficient of .312 is justifying a positive but statistically insignificant impact, hence not accepting the H1 of our results. Lastly, the influence of placing strategies on service orientation of community pharmacies, our have shown a coefficient of 1.513 where standard error of the estimates is .483. This result would show that for a one unit change in the value of placing related strategies, impact on service orientation is highly positive, significant at 99 percent confidence level. For better understanding, standardized regression coefficients are provided under Table 6 where the direct impact of pricing, promotion and placing strategies on service orientation of community pharmacies is highly significant except for the product related strategies.

TABLE 5. Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ser.Orient	<---	Price	-1.354	.490	-2.76	***
ser.Orient	<---	promotion	.333	.025	12.90	***
ser.Orient	<---	product	.312	.277	1.126	.260
ser.Orient	<---	Place	1.513	.483	3..132	***
P1	<---	product	1.000			
P2	<---	product	.601	.158	3.794	***
P3	<---	product	.903	.164	5.510	***
P4	<---	product	.517	.139	3.717	***
PR1	<---	price	1.000			
PR2	<---	price	2.152	.517	4.164	***
PR3	<---	price	2.282	.541	4.218	***
PR4	<---	price	1.082	.319	3.393	***
PL4	<---	place	1.000			
PL3	<---	place	.999	.185	5.400	***
PL2	<---	place	1.334	.220	6.062	***
PL1	<---	place	1.324	.214	6.198	***
PRO3	<---	promotion	1.125	.196	5.729	***

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PRO2	<---	promotion	1.003	.178	5.640	***
PRO1	<---	promotion	1.000			
SEROR4	<---	ser.Orient	1.000			
SEROR3	<---	ser.Orient	.527	.127	4.146	***
SEROR2	<---	ser.Orient	.538	.105	5.125	***
SEROR1	<---	ser.Orient	.818	.119	6.857	***

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Variables/Items	Direction	Variables/Items	Standardized Estimate
ser.Orient	<---	Price	-.684***
ser.Orient	<---	Promotion	.278***
ser.Orient	<---	Product	.280
ser.Orient	<---	Place	1.148***
P1	<---	Product	.586
P2	<---	Product	.316
P3	<---	Product	.520
P4	<---	Product	.309
PR1	<---	Price	.305
PR2	<---	Price	.676
PR3	<---	Price	.739
PR4	<---	Price	.355
PL4	<---	Place	.470
PL3	<---	Place	.474
PL2	<---	Place	.580
PL1	<---	Place	.605
PRO3	<---	Promotion	.566
PRO2	<---	Promotion	.550
PRO1	<---	Promotion	.492
SEROR4	<---	ser.Orient	.618
SEROR3	<---	ser.Orient	.300
SEROR2	<---	ser.Orient	.377
SEROR1	<---	ser.Orient	.529

CONCLUSION

Marketing mix strategies are playing a good role in defining in the overall market position of the business both in domestic and international market. However, in service sector their role is not as widely observed as in manufacturing industries. In the country of Thailand, various community based pharmacies are providing their services while service different members from the society. This research has been carried out to explore the influence of marketing mix strategies on service orientation for the community pharmacies in Thailand. Study results are justified through applying the structural equation modelling approach in AMOS. Our results justify that marketing mix strategies for the placing, promotion and pricing have their significant impact where the placing and promotional strategies are positively but pricing is negatively impacting on the service orientation in the local pharmacies of Thailand. However, our results have not found no significant evidence to predict that product related strategies are impacting on the service orientation of community pharmacies in the Thai economy.

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