

# The Level of Importance of the Four P's by the Customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron Stations in General Santos City

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**Abstract:-** Consumer-centric companies focus their resources on developing products and establishing strategies that satisfy customers' needs and wants. The efforts involved in determining customers' desires require rigorous analysis because of customers' heterogeneity. Cost leadership, one of the three generic competitive strategies, aims to increase profit by reducing the cost of production and offering a competitively priced product. This strategy is effective in maximizing the limited resources of the company. In relation to the three generic competitive strategies, there are factors that affect customers' decisions. The factors that affect customers' preferences are location, brand, behavior, values, product attributes, quality, price, promotion, and perception. This study focused on the four significant factors, which are the Four Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. Respondents, who are customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron fuel stations in General Santos City, evaluated the level of importance of the Four Ps. A sample size of 120 respondents was chosen to answer the validated questionnaires. A descriptive-quantitative research design and stratified sampling methods were applied in the study. Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS were the software used to analyze and interpret the data. The findings indicate that the place factor and the promotion factor, among the four factors, have the highest and lowest means, respectively. According to the respondents, price information and brand are very important, since they have the highest mean in price and product factors. The analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test indicates that there are no significant differences in the level of importance of the four Ps among Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations in General Santos City as evaluated by the respondents.

**Keywords:-** Fuel Stations, Four Ps, Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Customer.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Petroleum products have a worldwide demand of 99 million barrels per day of crude oil, and the product will probably increase by 10% in 2045 (Statista, 2022). Department of Energy (2022) discussed that petroleum exploration in the Philippines began in 1896 with the drilling of the Toledo-1 well on Cebu Island. Worldometer (2022) discussed that there are one hundred thirty-eight million barrels of oil reserves in the Philippines as of 2016 with ranking it 64th in the world. They

added that the country consumes 429,000 barrels per day and produces 33,258 barrels per day of oil (Worldometer, 2022).

The authors conducted a study on the petroleum industry in the Philippines, and in their study of the brief profiles of three petroleum companies operating in the Philippines: Caltex (Chevron), Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, and Petron Corporation, they identified that Petron Corporation was the largest oil refining company in the Philippines (U et al., 2021). U et al. (2021) added that Shell started as an importer and seller of motor gasoline in 1914 and operated a crude oil refinery in Batangas, Philippines. The authors discussed that Caltex or Chevron was organized in 1936 and currently owns nearly 700 service stations and 20 supply facilities, including terminals and depots (U et al., 2021).

Although petroleum sold by fuel stations is among the most valuable commodities in the world, fuel stations tend to experience losses and failures, resulting in the business' closure. According to Hooley et al. (2017), a company needs to understand its customers and be responsive to changes in the market. The authors further discussed that individual customers or segments in most markets are not homogeneous and may pay for products or services because they are cheap, comfortable, efficient, or satisfy their desire for self-image and status (Hooley et al., 2017).

The four Ps (product, price, place, and promotion), or the Marketing Mix, affect the marketability of products and services. Consumers choose the products they prefer, consider the price and location in buying them, and are affected by their promotion in the market. Shell, Petron, and Chevron consider the four Ps vital in their operations. The company cannot operate without the product's availability, or its price is unacceptable to consumers. The establishment of fuel stations should be in a proper location to generate sales because consumers consider the accessibility of the product. Businesses are affected by how they design, plan, and allocate resources to the four Ps or Marketing Mix.

There was no extensive research on the degree of importance of the four Ps regarding fuel stations in the Philippines to the best of my knowledge. The limited publication of marketing research regarding fuel stations keeps the information exclusive to its users, which is their competitive advantage. Hence, it is not widely known that

factors such as product, price, place, and promotion affect customers' decisions at fuel stations.

In the previous study, Rajagopal (2019) discussed that perceived value, not the price or its attributes, produces a driving force for market leadership. This perception about price contradicts the Code of Ethics of the American Marketing Association (Perreault et al., 2002), which requires the companies to disclose the full price associated with the purchase of the product, or in the Philippines, which requires the media to announce the price adjustments with prior notice to the Department of Energy by the oil companies (Mendoza, 2014). In like manner, research conducted by Mwenda et al. (2016) regarding the factors that affect motorists' choice of a petrol station in Kenya showed that price is not a vital concern as one of the factors influencing customer behavior since in Kenya, the government controls their prices, and most petrol stations retail the product at the same or similar prices. Therefore, the authors in the previous study had different opinions regarding the effect of price on consumers' behavior toward a product.

There are two issues in this study: the level of importance of the four Ps as evaluated by the customers on the three different stations, such as Shell, Petron, and Chevron in General Santos City, and the significant differences in the importance of the four Ps as evaluated by the customers on the three different stations, such as Shell, Petron, and Chevron in General Santos City.

Using the information in this study, marketing strategies that focus on the four Ps can be formulated by fuel stations to produce products with better performance and quality as well as provide better service.

After this section, the study was structured as follows: 1) Section two provides the literature regarding customers' behavior, marketing tools, product, price, place, and promotion; 2) Section three contains the methodology that was employed; 3) Section four outlines the result and discussion; and 4) Section five discusses the conclusion and recommendations.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Customers' behavior, decision and need

The customer's perception, attitude, behavior, and motivation about the product or service affect his decision. Rajagopal (2019) explained that through a product's price and quality, consumers identify their perceived values about their desired satisfaction in exchange for the value of money. The knowledge and learning the consumer discovered from the community, peers, endorsement, promotion, web, and social networking influenced his buying behavior and perception. According to Rajagopal (2019), most consumer-centric companies make sure that consumer adopts a favorable perception through brand campaigns, social media exposure, and product trials that position the brand as a 'top-of-mind' choice and allow the consumer to make an additional or repeat purchase.

### B. Marketing tools to create strategies

An organization creates a marketing plan, considers environmental factors that affect the industry, identifies its competitive advantage, implements its strategy, and conducts a review to achieve a particular goal. The organization examines its strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities due to its limited resources and capabilities. In solving problems, information is necessary for analysis. Toyota collects and analyzes vast amounts of data and focuses on the habit of just-in-time information collection, where they collect the information required to formulate an appropriate business strategy, which is their secret ingredient for success (Hibino et al., 2018).

Value Chain Analysis is a well-known management tool for identifying business development strategies. A value chain describes the sequence of activities of an organization. Porter (1998) discussed that every organization has a series of activities to develop, produce, market, and support its items. The firm's total value consists of value activities described as physically and technologically distinct activities. The relevant value activities are thoroughly identified and disaggregated as part of the analytical process of enhancing the firm's competitive advantage. Understanding the value chain of a company is similar to finding the buyer's desire regarding the company's service or product, price, location and promotional activities.

### C. Product

The products should provide benefits to consumers in exchange for their money. The author discussed that product diversification, a way of developing new or extended products and markets through concentric, horizontal, and conglomerate diversification, is one of four approaches to considering product strategies (Rajagopal, 2019).

In product positioning as a marketing strategy, the organization designs the image and offer of the product in the customer's mind, which creates value and importance. Building a brand for the company has positive effects, such as brand loyalty. In addition, a brand creates traffic to the business and is resistant to price competition. Stewart et al. (2014) discussed that to build a strong brand, Kelvin Keller suggested the following: 1. To build awareness of the brand to the consumer, 2. Provide the consumer with the tangible and intangible offerings of the product to create importance to him and meet his needs, 3. Identify the response of the customers through evaluations, and 4. Finally, maintain continuous brand loyalty to the product by the consumer.

The customers' behavior is unpredictable, and their choice of product may be based not only on physical appearance but also on their emotional connections to the product. Their preference for the product may be due to the benefits they will gain, value in exchange for their money, availability, accessibility, lifestyle, and price. Rajagopal (2019) discussed that perceived value, not the price or its attributes, produces a driving force for market leadership. In building a brand name for a company's product, it should establish in the consumer's mind the superiority of the brand, its good market performance, and its quality.

In a study regarding the factors that affect consumers' choices in choosing fuel stations, the results show that the most critical factor affecting customers' decisions is product quality (Inderadi et al., 2020). Therefore, the authors suggest that the company develops quality according to international standards and considers it a competitive advantage (Inderadi et al., 2020). Manneh et al. (2020), in their study regarding the determinants of consumer preference for petrol consumption, concluded that the superior quality of service significantly influenced consumers' preference of fuel.

A survey of customers who buy gas at US convenience stores conducted by the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) showed that the quality of fuel and the quality of items inside the store are factors that affect customers' preferences (NACS, 2019). A research study made by Bisht S. et al. (2015) regarding the selection of fuel stations concluded that the location, quality, and quantity of fuel are the only factors that significantly affect the customer's choice of petrol stations and exclude the company's brand name in making such a choice.

#### D. Price

In the Philippines, the media will announce the price adjustments with prior notice to the Department of Energy by the oil companies (Mendoza, 2014). Haucap et al. (2017), in their exploration regarding the diversity of fuel stations and prices of fuel, found that factors such as the kind of shop, brand names, and availability of other services affect the frequency of changes in price and the price levels that the company sets. In the fuel industry, factors that affect pricing are production cost, competitor price level, economic value to the customer, desired competitive positioning, corporate objectives, and the price elasticity of demand (Hooley et al., 2017).

It is important to inform the customers of the price of the products. In the Code of Ethics of American Marketing Association, it is necessary to disclose the full price associated with the purchase of the product (Perreault et al., 2002). The consumers accepted Apple Computer's products despite their high prices. According to Ferrell et al. (2017), the high price point of Apple's products maintains an image of prestige, which gives them a high margin and allows them to focus on providing revolutionary new capabilities and convenience and, in return, offers value to customers in exchange for the price.

Research conducted by Mwenda et al. (2016) regarding the factors that affect motorists' choice of a petrol station in Kenya showed that price is not a vital concern as one of the factors influencing customer behavior. In addition, they concluded that factors such as service quality, accessibility, brand preference, and promotion affect the customer's decision and not the oil price since, in Kenya, the government controls their prices, and most petrol stations retail the product at the same or similar prices.

#### E. Place

The location of the business affects its profitability and distribution channels. Rajagopal (2019) defined channels as the organized structures of buyers and sellers who connect the customer and manufacturer in a given time and space. Philips

66 Company (2022) discussed the keys to site selection of fuel stations, and the company should focus on four areas such as: 1) Avoid investing in an area that has noticeably over-saturated gas stations and considers investing in site modeling; 2) Consider the location a high-traffic roadway that will bring a steady stream of customers and; 3) Finally, check the construction records and plans within the area that will impact the site accessibility and flow of customers.

According to Boison, D. et al. (2018), in their research about the factors that affect the sales performance of a fuel station project, concluded that location has the most positive influence on the volume of sales. Gültekin, B. (2013) discussed in her study that convenience positively affects satisfaction and switching costs. She added that when stations are access-convenient, customers feel more satisfied, and the cost associated with switching to another station will be higher.

#### F. Promotion

The organization may apply a promotion strategy to persuade consumers to use and patronize a product. The different promotion strategies are personal selling, advertising, sales promotion, and public relations Rajagopal (2019). The cleaning of windscreens, car washing, oil check, car washing, and giving gifts are promotional techniques applied in fuel stations to improve sales (Koske, 2012). Effective communication is necessary for promoting the product on social media websites. Insignificant products can be subject to commercial success through the capabilities of peer communication Rajagopal (2019).

In the transportation and logistics industry, fuel is a vital commodity. The limited fuel supply requires a better understanding of how consumers will utilize it effectively and efficiently. Consumers prefer a product that is valuable and cost-effective. As a strategy, fuel stations need to determine the level of importance of the four Ps of their target market to maximize the potential of their limited resources. The result of this study provides a better understanding of the importance of the four Ps on customers' perceptions. Unlike previous studies, this research provides some clarifications on the contradictory ideas regarding the importance of fuel price in assessing customers' decisions to purchase the product. In addition, businesses can use the gathered information to produce a profitable business. The results of this study may benefit certain individuals in the petroleum industry.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research and Sampling Design

The precise numbers of customers at Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations in General Santos City are unknown. The sample size for this population was decided using stratified sampling and the probability sampling method. The researcher separated the respondents into smaller groups using stratified sampling. The number of Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations in General Santos City was identified through an inquiry with the local government unit of General Santos City. There were four Chevron, seventeen Petron, and thirteen Shell stations registered in the local government unit. The information taken from the local government was used to establish a pre-sampling

sample size of thirty (30) respondents. The researcher administered a pre-sampling of thirty respondents composed of ten (10) respondents from customers of Shell stations, ten (10) respondents from customers of Petron stations, and ten (10) respondents from customers of Chevron stations. The final sample size will be determined by estimating the mean from the pre-sample size. Questionnaires were distributed to an additional ninety (90) respondents after the analysis of pre-sampling data, bringing the total sample size to one hundred twenty (120).

**B. Research Locale and Respondents**

The research was conducted within General Santos City, and the respondents were customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron fuel stations who were drivers and/or owners of motorcycles, tricycles, jeepneys, multicabs, and other types of vehicles that consumed fuel products.

**C. Research Instruments**

The structure of the questionnaires distributed to respondents was taken from Miss Thitimon Kongmee's (2019) study, "Service Marketing Strategy for PTT Gas Station," with some modifications and revisions. The researcher constructed the revisions based on the literature review. Questionnaires were presented to three experts for their review and comments using the Validation Instrument Form. A Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the importance of items in the questionnaire. The level of importance and the average point of the questionnaire are as follows: 1) Not important ( 1.00 – 1.40), 2) Little importance (1.50 - 2.40), 3) Moderate important (2.50 – 3.40), 4) Important (3.50 – 4.40) and 5) Very Important (4.50 – 5.00).

There are 120 questionnaires distributed to 120 respondents, and all of them answered the questionnaires. Since the researcher personally gathered the data from the respondents, the response rate is one hundred percent. These respondents were randomly selected among the drivers in the locality. The respondents were approached personally by the researcher to take part in the survey. The questionnaires were not mailed or delivered in any other form but were personally given to the respondents by the researcher. Although there is one driver who is about to refuse to take part in the survey, after giving a short explanation of the purpose of the survey, he then agreed to get involved.

**D. Research Gathering Procedures**

The processes for gathering the data for statistical analysis were as follows:

- The researcher prepared the Informed Consent Template and the two-page survey questionnaire for thirty respondents as a pre-sampling requirement.
- The researcher visited business areas and public places to allow respondents to fill out the survey and Informed Consent Template. The researcher informed the respondents of its importance, purpose, and confidentiality.
- The researcher summarized the data in Microsoft Excel and submitted it to the adviser and statistician for their comments and recommendations.

- The researcher continued with another batch of respondents to complete the total sample size using the same steps stated in the first, second, and third steps.

**E. Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment**

This study focuses on measuring through statistical analysis the level of importance of the product, price, place, and promotion that affect customers perception. Shell, Petron, and Chevron are the independent variables while the four Ps are the dependent variables in this research.

This study examined the primary data to generate conclusions and recommendations. Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS are software used to analyze and interpret data. The study presented the results using the mean. In the analysis of variances to determine the significant differences in the level of importance of the Four Ps as evaluated by the customers of the three stations, a Kruskal-Wallis statistical formula and a non-parametric test were used instead of ANOVA since the normality requirement was not achieved. The Kruskal-Wallis test assessed the p-value. The p-value reflects the degree of data comparability with the null hypothesis. If the p-value is less than 0.05, it is deemed to be statistically significant, and the null hypothesis that there's no significant difference between the means should be rejected.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**A. Demographic Information**

There were 111 male respondents and 9 female respondents, for a total of 120 respondents in this study. In the total of 120 respondents, the male respondents are 92.50 percent, and only 7.50 percent are female respondents, as shown in Table 1. Most of the time, the majority of the drivers of public utility vehicles in the Philippines are male, based on the personal observation of the researcher. When using private vehicles, men comprise the majority of drivers in the Philippines as compared to women.

Table 1:- Gender (Source: Author, 2023)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	111	92.50%
Female	9	7.50%
Total	120	100.00%

In the age distribution of the respondents, those between 31 and 40 years old have the highest frequency, followed by respondents with an age between 41 and 50 years. Those with an age of 51 years and above have the lowest frequency, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2:- Age Distribution (Source: Author, 2023)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30	10	8.33%
31 – 40	55	45.83%
41 – 50	51	42.50%
51 and above	4	3.33%
Total	120	100.00%

**B. Inferential Statistics**

Table 3 shows the statistical results of the data gathered regarding the level of importance of the four Ps. Among the statements in the product factor, "Brand is well-known, reliable, and widely accepted" has the highest mean evaluated by the customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations with a mean of 4.55, 4.53, and 4.65, respectively. A brand creates awareness and builds a reputation. This study shows that the three stations accomplish proper branding. In addition, brand loyalty affects consumer behavior and allows repeat purchases (Rajagopal, 2019).

A research study by Bisht S. et al. (2015) regarding the selection of fuel stations concluded that the location, quality, and quantity of fuel are the only factors that significantly affect the customer’s choice of petrol stations and exclude the company’s brand name in making such a choice, which contradicts the result of this study. Rajagopal (2019) discussed that most consumer-centric companies make sure that consumers adopt a favorable perception through brand campaigns, social media exposure, and product trials that position the brand as a ‘top-of-mind’ choice and allow the consumer to make an additional or repeat purchase.

**Table 3:- Highest and Lowest Mean of the Four Ps for Shell, Petron, and Chevron Stations (Source: Author, 2023)**

Four Ps	Highest Mean (Shell, Petron, and Chevron)	Lowest Mean (Shell, Petron, Chevron)	Overall Mean (Shell, Petron, Chevron)
Product	Brand is well-known, reliable, and widely accepted (M= 4.55, 4.53 and 4.65)	Availability of other goods that were offered through stores and additional services such as cleaning windscreen, change oil and washing (M= 3.50, 3.18 and 3.08)	M= 4.18 4.00 4.09
Price	Price can be viewed easily on the price board (M= 4.65, 4.50 and 4.75)	Other service fees such as change oil, and car cleaning are cheaper compared to competitors (M=2.68, 2.65 and 2.75)	M= 3.68 3.66 3.72
Place	The station is easy to find compared to competitors (M= 4.60) Convenient, clean and organized (M=4.68 and 4.65)	Fuel stations have enough fuel dispensers to provide services (M= 4.30 and 4.15) The number of fuel stations is higher when compared to competitors ( M=4.25)	M= 4.48 4.36 4.43
Promotion	Station provides rewards, gifts, tokens, giveaways, loyalty cards, discounts, seasonal promotions, and other privileges (M= 3.90) Recommended by friends, family and colleagues (M=3.48) Advertisements are available such as TV and radio ads, brochure, and ads in social networks (M= 3.23 )	It provides trainings and skills like driving and vehicle repair (M= 2.08, 1.98 and 2.08)	M= 3.16 2.75 2.91

Among the statements in the product factor, "Availability of other goods that were offered through stores and additional services such as cleaning windscreen, change oil and washing", has the lowest mean as evaluated by customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations, with a mean of 3.50, 3.18 and 3.08, respectively. The product diversification strategy of introducing other products by the stations shows that it is moderately important to customers. Manneh et al. (2020), in their study regarding the determinants of consumer preference for petrol consumption, concluded that the additional services significantly influenced consumers’ preferences of fuel, which contradicts this research. The overall mean of the product factor falls on the second rank among the four factors, from highest to lowest.

In the price factor, "Price can be viewed easily on the price board", has the highest mean for Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations with a mean of 4.65, 4.50, and 4.75, respectively. In the Code of Ethics of American Marketing Association, it is necessary to disclose the full price associated with the purchase of the product (Perreault et al., 2002). The price displayed on the price board allows the customers to make an easy decision that is favorable to them.

Rajagopal (2019) discussed that perceived value, not the price or its attributes, produces a driving force for market leadership, which contradicts the statement that information about the price is very important to customers. Perceived value represents the amount that he is willing to pay for a product or service. Factors such as brand and quality affect customers’ perceptions of the value of the product. An author discussed that the high price point of Apple’s products maintains an image of prestige, which gives them a high margin and allows them to focus on providing revolutionary new capabilities and convenience and, in return, offers value to customers in exchange for the price (Ferrell et al.,2017). The customer can identify the perceived value with reference to the price of the product. Therefore, the availability of the price gives him the opportunity to compare his perceived value with the price.

In the price factor, "Other service fees such as change oil and car cleaning are cheaper compared to competitors", has the lowest mean as evaluated by customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations with a mean of 2.68, 2.65 and 2.75, respectively. In a survey of customers who buy gas at US convenience stores conducted by the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS), it was shown that customers prefer a store due to its lower prices of products, which

contradicts this study since cheaper prices of other services in the three stations are moderately important to respondents and have a lower mean (NACS, 2019). Since the product diversification strategy of the stations, such as introducing other products, shows that it is moderately important to customers, the prices of such products may produce a similar level of importance. The overall mean of the price factor falls on the third rank among the four factors, from highest to lowest.

Among the statements in the place factor, "The station is easy to find compared to competitors," has the highest mean of 4.60 for Shell stations. In addition to the place factor, "Convenient, clean, and organized," has the highest mean for Petron and Chevron stations, with a mean of 4.68 and 4.65, respectively. In research regarding the sales performance of a fuel station project, they concluded that location has the most positive influence on the volume of sales (Boison, D. et al., 2018). In addition, Gültekin, B. (2013) discussed in her study that convenience positively affects satisfaction and switching costs. She added that when stations are accessible, customers feel more satisfied, and the cost associated with switching to another station will be higher. In another study regarding the determinants of consumer preference for petrol consumption, location significantly influenced consumers' preferences for fuel (Manneh et al., 2020). Many studies support the idea that location significantly affects customers' preference. The overall mean of the place factor falls on the first rank among the four factors, from highest to lowest. Customers consider very important that the location of the stations be easy to find, higher number of fuel stations, enough fuel dispensers, convenient and clean and near business operations.

In the promotion factor, " Station provides rewards, gifts, tokens, giveaways, loyalty cards, discounts, seasonal promotions and other privileges " has the highest mean of 3.90 for customers of Shell stations. The cleaning of windscreens, car washing, oil check, car washing, and giving gifts are promotional techniques applied in fuel stations to improve sales (Koske, 2012). Shell provides Shell fleet cards in exclusive packages for customers (Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, 2020 ). It indicates that their promotional campaign has an impact on consumers.

In the same promotion factor, "Recommended by friends, family, and colleagues," has the highest mean indicating that customers find word-of-mouth recommendations to be important when evaluating Petron. An author discussed how insignificant products can be subject to commercial success through the capabilities of peer communication (Rajagopal, 2019). Consumers are eager to share their good experiences with others, which in effect has a positive impact on the company.

In addition to the promotion factor, "Advertisements are available, such as TV and radio ads, brochure and ads in social networks" has the highest mean of 3.23 for Chevron stations. Rajagopal (2019) discussed that multinational companies have their own advertising strategies to improve sales, such as advertising a brand with proven market share and high frequency, influencing consumers because it provides a positive result to them and increasing the value of the brand name.

Among the statements in the promotion factor, "It provides training and skills like driving and vehicle repair" has the lowest mean as evaluated by the customers of Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations with a mean of 2.08, 1.98 and 2.08, respectively. Shell gives Shell Fleet Hub online training to customers and provides training and benefits to its workforce (Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, 2020 ). The training provided to the customers by fuel stations such as Shell has a lesser effect based on the study since it has little importance to them.

Table 4 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test comparing the stations' level of importance for the Four Ps as evaluated by the customers. It includes the mean rank, chi-square value, degrees of freedom (df), p-value, and remarks for each marketing mix factor and station. The Kruskal-Wallis H Test shows no significant difference among the stations for the product factor ( $\chi^2 = 1.888$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.389$ ). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ranks of the stations' level of importance for the product factor.

Similar to the product factor, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test reveals no significant difference among the stations for the price factor ( $\chi^2 = 0.203$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.904$ ). Thus, we fail to reject  $H_0$ , indicating no statistically significant difference in the mean ranks of the stations' level of importance for the price factor.

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test demonstrates no significant difference among the stations for the place factor ( $\chi^2 = 0.123$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.940$ ). Therefore, we fail to reject  $H_0$ , suggesting no statistically significant difference in the mean ranks of the stations' level of importance for the place factor.

For the promotion factor, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test yields a p-value of 0.089 ( $\chi^2 = 4.839$ ,  $df = 2$ ), indicating a borderline significance. Although the p-value does not reach the conventional threshold of 0.05, it is close to it. As a result, we fail to reject  $H_0$ , but it is worth noting that there might be a trend or potential difference in the mean ranks of the stations' level of importance for the promotion factor. Among the four Ps, the promotional factor is almost near the conventional threshold of 0.05 in the p-value. Since the promotional factor is not equal to or lower than 0.05 in p-value, rather than greater than p-value, the deviation from the null hypothesis is not statistically significant, and the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Table 4:- Comparison of the Stations' Level of Importance of the Four Ps as Evaluated by the Customers using Kruskal-Wallis H Test (Source: Author, 2023)

Marketing Mix Factor	Station	Mean Rank	Chi-square	df	p-value	Remarks
Product	Shell	66.24	1.888	2	0.389	Not Significant
	Petron	55.76				
	Chevron	59.50				
Price	Shell	59.76	0.203	2	0.904	Not Significant
	Petron	59.25				
	Chevron	62.49				
Place	Shell	61.69	0.123	2	0.940	Not Significant
	Petron	60.78				
	Chevron	59.04				
Promotion	Shell	69.50	4.839	2	0.089**	Not Significant
	Petron	52.54				
	Chevron	59.46				

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.05$  (  $p$ -value does not reached conventional threshold of 0.05)

In summary, the analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test indicates that there are no significant differences among the stations for the Product, Price, and Place factors. However, for the promotion factor, although the difference is not statistically significant at the conventional level, there might be a trend or potential difference among the stations.

**V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*A. Conclusion*

The results of this study showed that among the statements in the product factor, "Brand is well-known, reliable, and widely accepted" has the highest mean as evaluated by the respondents. Shell, Petron, and Chevron build good reputations and brand exposure. In the product factor, the statement "Availability of other goods that were offered through stores and additional services such as cleaning windscreens, change oil and washing," has the lowest mean as evaluated by respondents. The product diversification strategy of introducing other products by the stations shows that it is moderately important to customers.

Among the statements evaluated by the respondents, "Price can be viewed easily on the price board" has the highest mean among all stations and factors. The availability of the price helps in the decision-making of customers, which is considered very important to them. Although the perceived value, not the price or its attributes, produces a driving force for market leadership, which contradicts the statement that information about the price is very important to customers, the availability of the price gives him the opportunity to compare his perceived value with the price.

The respondents evaluate the place factor as very important. They prefer stations that are easy to find, have higher numbers compared to competitors, have enough fuel dispensers, convenient, clean, and located near business operations. It supports the previous research showing that location has a positive influence on sales and customers' preferences. In the same way that the convenience of fuel stations positively affects satisfaction, as discussed in previous research.

The respondents evaluate the promotion factor as moderately important. The promotion factors are advertisement, rewards, discounts, community involvement, and recommendations from friends and family. Promotional strategies can be an effective tool to improve customers' satisfaction, which in this study requires more impact on customers since respondents consider them moderately important.

The analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test indicates that there are no significant differences in the mean ranks of Shell, Petron, and Chevron stations' level of importance of the four Ps as evaluated by their customers.

*B. Recommendations*

This study shows the importance of product, price, place, and promotion as marketing tools in evaluating the factors that affect customers' decisions about fuel stations. Based on the conclusions of this study, the following are the recommendations:

- Fuel station owners should establish their businesses in a location that is easy to find, has a higher number of stations with enough fuel dispensers, convenient, clean, and is located near business operations. They should inform their customers of the latest price of their products and establish a well-known brand to maintain loyalty and improve promotions through peer communication. They may offer rewards, gifts, tokens, giveaways, loyalty cards, discounts, seasonal promotions, and other privileges to improve customer satisfaction.

Fuel station owners should develop marketing strategies based on factors of little or moderate importance to customers, such as the availability of other goods and services, the cheaper price of other services, the availability of enough fuel dispensers, and the availability of training, to allocate their resources effectively and improve their profitability. Although the factors previously discussed are of little importance to the customers, they still affect their preferences and satisfaction with the products. This approach applies to the promotion factor, which has the lowest mean among other factors.

Fuel station owners should develop a better pricing strategy. The respondents' evaluation of all the factors shows that the information about the fuel price has the highest mean. Therefore, price information is very important to customers. Aside from establishing a well-known brand, the proper and appropriate price of the products has a great impact on customers' decisions since it relates to the perceived value of the product.

- The local government unit of General Santos City may guide business enthusiasts regarding the importance of the four Ps in their journey to establishing a profitable business and assist in the development of good business practices.
- The transportation industry may encourage individuals who belong to their organization to consider the effectiveness and efficiency of the four Ps as a marketing tool.
- The result of this study will serve as a reference for subsequent investigations and future studies by researchers to improve the importance of the four Ps as a marketing tool.

The result of this study can be generalized to a broader population based on the following considerations: 1) participants were drivers of private and public utility vehicles, which reflect the characteristics of a general population of consumers of fuel products; 2) the probability sampling method was used and participants were randomly selected; 3) research was made without bias; 4) research was conducted using survey questionnaires distributed to participants and not within a controlled environment or in any laboratory; and 5) the result of the research may be applied to different samples to expand its generalizability.

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