

Attitudes of International University Students Toward the Social Marketing Mix

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Abstract - This research had two primary objectives: (1) to examine the level of attitudes among international university students toward the social marketing mix, and (2) to compare differences in these attitudes based on personal factors such as gender, age, program of study, year level, and faculty affiliation. The study sample consisted of 297 students from an international university located in Saraburi Province. Data were collected using a questionnaire, which demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .96. The data analysis employed both descriptive statistics and inferential tests, including t-tests and one-way ANOVA. The findings indicated that, overall, students held a generally positive attitude toward the social marketing mix ($\bar{x} = 3.79$, S.D. = .69). Among the four elements, promotion was rated the highest in importance, followed by pricing, distribution channels, and product. When comparing attitudes across personal factors, statistically significant differences were found based on gender and program of study. Female students and those enrolled in Thai-language programs expressed stronger attitudes toward the social marketing mix than their counterparts. However, no significant differences were observed concerning age or year of study, except in certain areas. For instance, promotional strategies showed variation by year level, while attitudes toward product, pricing, and distribution channels differed across faculties. The results suggest that the social marketing mix continues to play a crucial role in shaping student attitudes—particularly promotional strategies, which align well with the interests and behavioral patterns of youth in the digital era. University administrators, marketers, and social project managers may find these insights valuable in designing targeted policies or initiatives that effectively address student needs and encourage greater social engagement.

Keywords: Attitude, Social Marketing, Social Marketing Mix, International University Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Social marketing has emerged as a vital tool for promoting sustainable development within both organizations and society at large. In today's world—where addressing social and environmental challenges is increasingly critical—social marketing plays a significant role not only in encouraging socially beneficial behavior but also in fostering a sense of responsibility among businesses, institutions, and individuals. Over the past several decades, it has gained

widespread recognition across various countries for its effectiveness in influencing public behavior in ways that support the common good and generate broader societal change (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Initially, social marketing efforts primarily focused on public health promotion and disease prevention. However, its scope has since broadened to include a wide range of social and environmental issues. These efforts aim to foster positive values and encourage responsible behavior that contributes to the wellbeing of both people and the planet. Against this backdrop, understanding how students perceive social marketing has become increasingly important—particularly in the context of higher education, where students represent a key demographic capable of initiating meaningful social change. Their attitudes and behaviors have a direct impact on how effectively social marketing campaigns are received and supported. International university students, who often come from diverse cultural backgrounds and hold varying perspectives, may respond differently to the components of the social marketing mix (Liu et al., 2019). Investigating their attitudes can help uncover the key factors that influence their decisions to engage with and support marketing initiatives addressing social causes. Such research can provide marketers and campaign organizers with valuable insights into how cultural differences and perceptions shape student responses, allowing for more targeted and effective communication strategies across countries and regions (Lee, 2020). Furthermore, gaining a deeper understanding of the attitudes held by international students is crucial, as this group tends to possess strong analytical thinking skills and a willingness to engage with efforts that contribute to social development. Effectively raising awareness and promoting positive values among them is therefore of great importance. Insights from this research can assist marketers in selecting suitable strategies for advancing social marketing efforts by aligning campaigns with students' values and attitudes (Villacorta et al., 2024).

The application of the marketing mix in promoting social marketing serves as a strategic tool for campaign management. This framework consists of four primary components—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—commonly known as the 4Ps. When adapted for use in social marketing campaigns, these elements enable marketers to design initiatives that effectively engage and influence their intended audiences (Andreasen, 2002). For instance, in environmental campaigns, selecting eco-friendly products (Product) and setting prices that are accessible to the target demographic (Price) play a key role in shaping consumer choices. Students who are environmentally conscious may place greater value on sustainable products (Villacorta et al., 2024). Meanwhile, choosing appropriate distribution channels (Place) can enhance accessibility—for example, making eco-friendly goods available through platforms frequently used by students (Lee, 2020). By integrating the 4Ps into campaigns targeting international university students, marketers can gain deeper insight into the purchasing behaviors of this segment and craft more impactful outreach efforts. Promotion strategies that align with student interests and values are especially effective in encouraging the adoption of environmentally responsible products and services. Today's students are increasingly drawn to items that help reduce environmental harm

(Gao et al., 2022). Despite the global interest in social marketing and consumer attitudes, research in the context of international university students remains limited—particularly within Thai universities that are home to diverse cultural and ethnic populations. The attitudes of these students toward the social marketing mix have not been extensively examined, creating a gap in the literature that deserves attention. Understanding these attitudes is crucial for marketers aiming to tailor their strategies to meet the expectations of a culturally varied student body (Lee, 2020). This study is designed to help fill that gap by offering data-driven insights that can support the development of more targeted and culturally appropriate social marketing campaigns for international students studying in Thailand.

Building upon the literature review and identified research gaps, the researcher was motivated to explore the attitudes of students currently enrolled at an international university in Saraburi Province toward the social marketing mix. The findings from this investigation will not only provide a clearer understanding of the target group's behavior but also contribute to the development of marketing campaigns that are more tailored, relevant, and effective in reaching this audience. From a theoretical standpoint, the study offers a contribution to the growing body of knowledge in social marketing, particularly in understanding attitudes among culturally diverse international students. On a practical level, the insights gained will assist marketers in crafting strategies that are aligned with the preferences and perceptions of international university students. Such alignment is crucial in promoting socially responsible initiatives and fostering sustainable environmental practices in the long term.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the level of attitudes held by international university students toward the social marketing mix.
2. To compare differences in these attitudes based on gender, age, academic program, year of study, and faculty.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATED RESEARCH

1. Social Marketing Mix

Social marketing has been widely adopted across various countries as a means to encourage behaviors that benefit both society and the environment. A core approach in designing such campaigns involves the application of the marketing mix—commonly known as the 4Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Andreasen, 2002). These four elements form the foundation of effective social marketing strategies that aim to influence public behavior by providing information and encouraging decisions that align with societal well-being.

1.1 Product

In the context of social marketing, the term "product" refers to goods, services, or ideas that can generate positive outcomes for society or the environment (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Selecting the right product involves considering its potential to promote health, address environmental concerns, or tackle social issues. A clear example is promoting eco-friendly alternatives—products that reduce plastic waste or help conserve natural resources (Villacorta et al., 2024). Research has shown that offerings aligned with the values of socially engaged consumers are more likely to be accepted (Gao & Zhang, 2019).

1.2 Price

Pricing in social marketing must take into account the accessibility of the product to the intended audience. Affordability is key—setting a price point that does not create barriers to access is essential. This might involve pricing products low enough to reach the general public, particularly when encouraging socially responsible behaviors (Andreasen, 2002). Moreover, pricing should reflect production efficiency or resource-saving measures to ensure sustainability in the long run (Villacorta et al., 2024). Price remains a critical factor in attracting consumers, especially in campaigns promoting environmentally friendly goods or socially beneficial programs.

1.3 Place

Place, within social marketing, refers to how and where a product or message is delivered to reach the target audience most effectively. Distribution is no longer limited to physical retail locations; digital platforms and online tools play a growing role in campaign delivery (Lee, 2020). In the digital era, online access increases reach, especially among younger demographics (Liu et al., 2019). By selecting distribution channels that students or environmentally conscious individuals frequently use, campaigns can expand their impact across a broader audience.

1.4 Promotion

Promotion is essential in raising awareness and encouraging the adoption of social products or services. Selecting the right promotional tools—such as social media engagement, attention-grabbing content, or product demonstrations—can greatly enhance campaign visibility and acceptance (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Promotion serves to inform, inspire, and motivate behavioral change, particularly when addressing pressing societal or environmental issues (Villacorta et al., 2024). Using the right promotional strategies also helps build credibility and ensure the campaign resonates effectively with the audience (Andreasen, 2002).

In summary, the 4Ps of the marketing mix are instrumental in shaping successful social marketing campaigns. When thoughtfully applied, these four components enable marketers to effectively reach their audiences. This includes choosing socially or environmentally beneficial products that align with consumer values, offering accessible pricing, using well-targeted distribution channels, and implementing engaging promotional strategies. The literature clearly supports that incorporating the 4Ps into campaign design plays a critical role in influencing

behavior and encouraging greater participation in socially and environmentally responsible initiatives.

2. Related Research

Understanding the relationship between the social marketing mix and individuals' personal characteristics—such as age, gender, education, and background—is essential for analyzing consumer behavior within the context of social marketing campaigns. This area of research focuses on how students enrolled at international universities perceive elements of the social marketing mix, and how these perceptions differ based on their personal profiles. A review of previous studies highlights several key insights. Kotler and Lee (2008) emphasized that social marketing can effectively influence consumer behavior when campaign strategies are tailored to the audience's personal traits. Such alignment improves campaign effectiveness and encourages more positive, socially and environmentally responsible actions. Andreasen (2006) further noted that customizing social marketing strategies based on the characteristics of the target group—such as age, education level, and socio-cultural background—can significantly enhance the impact of these efforts. He concluded that successful social marketing campaigns often consider such personal factors, as they shape how individuals perceive and respond to promotional messages. In a more recent study, Villacorta et al. (2024) examined how cultural and personal differences influence reactions to environmental marketing campaigns. Their research found that individuals with strong environmental concerns are more likely to support campaigns promoting eco-friendly products. Cultural context also emerged as a key determinant in shaping attitudes and engagement with these campaigns.

Liu et al. (2019) explored consumer responses to social marketing efforts across culturally diverse populations. Their findings emphasized that personal values and social perspectives influence product perception and responsiveness to socially oriented marketing efforts. Cultural differences—particularly in environmental knowledge and awareness of social issues—were found to shape the effectiveness of marketing messages. Thus, strategic adaptations that consider these variables are essential for improving campaign reach and impact. In light of these findings, the present study incorporates personal characteristics as a key variable in examining how students' attitudes toward the social marketing mix may vary. By analyzing these differences, the research seeks to provide insights that can inform the development of more targeted and culturally responsive marketing strategies.

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

- 1. Population and Sample:** The population for this study consisted of students enrolled at Asia-Pacific International University, located in Muak Lek District, Saraburi Province. In the first

semester of the 2024 academic year, the total student population was 1,145. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1970) formula for known populations, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This calculation yielded a sample size of approximately 296.44, which was rounded up to 297 students. The data were collected through convenience sampling. Upon completion of the data collection process, 297 valid questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 100% response rate.

2. **Research Instrument:** The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed based on previous studies. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one gathered demographic information from the respondents and included five items: gender, age, academic program, year of study, and faculty. Section two focused on the social marketing mix and was adapted from the works of Chalermponwannakadee (2019) and Unaprom (2022). This section was composed of 20 items, categorized under four sub-dimensions: product, pricing, distribution channels, and promotion. The first section utilized a check-sheet format, while the second employed a five-point Likert scale, where 5 indicated "strongly agree" and 1 indicated "strongly disagree." After collecting all 297 questionnaires, the reliability of the instrument was assessed. The overall reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated at .96. According to Cho and Kim (2015), a reliability score of .70 or higher indicates that the instrument is suitable for statistical analysis.
3. **Statistical Analysis:** Data analysis was performed using a standard statistical software package. The statistics used included frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations. To interpret the mean scores, the class interval method was applied, based on Vanichbuncha's (2002) formula. The scale used to interpret the results was as follows:
 - Mean scores from 4.21 to 5.00 = Very High
 - Mean scores from 3.41 to 4.20 = High
 - Mean scores from 2.61 to 3.40 = Moderate/Uncertain
 - Mean scores from 1.81 to 2.60 = Low
 - Mean scores from 1.00 to 1.80 = Very Low

To assess differences between variables, the study employed t-tests and F-tests. Where significant differences were found, Scheffe's method was used for post hoc analysis.

V. RESULTS FINDINGS

A. *Descriptive Analysis: Frequency and Percentage*

The participants in this study were students currently enrolled at an international university located in Saraburi Province. The majority were female (207 students, 69.7%) and studying in Thai-language programs (241 students, 81.1%). Most respondents were between the ages of 19 and 24 (242 students, 81.5%), with the highest proportion in their first year of study (154 students, 51.9%). The largest number of participants came from the Faculty of Nursing (138 students, 46.5%).

B. Descriptive Analysis: Mean and Standard Deviation

The analysis of student attitudes toward the social marketing mix revealed that the overall mean score was relatively high ($\bar{x} = 3.79$, S.D. = .69). When examining individual components of the marketing mix, the results showed that: Promotion received the highest average score ($\bar{x} = 3.84$, S.D. = .75), Price followed closely behind ($\bar{x} = 3.79$, S.D. = .76), Place ranked third ($\bar{x} = 3.77$, S.D. = .76) and Product ranked fourth ($\bar{x} = 3.75$, S.D. = .75). These results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Student Attitudes Toward the Social Marketing Mix

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation	Rank
Product	3.75	.75	High	4
Price	3.79	.76	High	2
Place	3.77	.76	High	3
Promotion	3.84	.75	High	1
Total	3.79	.69	High	

C. Inferential Analysis: t-test

Gender

A statistically significant difference at the .05 level was found between male and female students in terms of price, place, and promotion. Female students reported higher mean scores in these areas ($\bar{x} = 3.85$, 3.84, and 3.95, respectively) than their male counterparts. However, there was no significant gender-based difference in attitudes toward product. These findings are summarized in Table 2.

Program Type

Significant differences at the .05 level were also found between students in Thai-language and English-language programs across all four elements of the social marketing mix. Students in Thai-language programs showed higher attitudes toward product, price, place, and promotion ($\bar{x} = 3.85$, 3.89, 3.88, and 3.95, respectively) compared to those in English-language programs, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. t-test Analysis of Differences in Attitudes Toward the Social Marketing Mix by Gender and Program Type

Variable	Male (90)		Female (207)		t	p
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.		
Product	3.67	.80	3.79	.73	-1.21	.23
Price	3.65	.79	3.85	.73	-2.07	.04*
Place	3.59	.82	3.84	.72	-2.63	.01*
Promotion	3.59	.80	3.95	.71	-3.84	.00*
Variable	Thai (241)		International (56)		t	p
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.		

Product	3.85	.70	3.36	.84	4.50	.00*
Price	3.89	.72	3.33	.74	5.23	.00*
Place	3.88	.71	3.28	.78	5.66	.00*
Promotion	3.95	.73	3.37	.69	5.45	.00*

D. F-test Analysis (One-Way ANOVA)

Age

An analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether students' attitudes toward the four elements of the social marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion—differed according to age. The results revealed no statistically significant differences in attitudes across different age groups for any of the variables examined. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Results of Attitudes Toward the Social Marketing Mix by Age

Variable	F	Sig.
Product	.57	.56
Price	.58	.56
Place	1.23	.29
Promotion	2.61	.08

Year of Study

The one-way ANOVA results examining students' attitudes toward the social marketing mix—specifically product, price, place, and promotion—across different year levels indicate statistically significant differences at the .05 level in two areas: place and promotion. No significant differences were found in attitudes toward product and price, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Results of Attitudes Toward the Social Marketing Mix by Year Level

Variable	F	Sig.
Product	2.54	.06
Price	1.84	.14
Place	2.73	.04*
Promotion	4.40	.01*

To further explore the differences in place, a post hoc comparison using Scheffé's method was conducted. However, no statistically significant pairwise differences were found. Thus, although the ANOVA showed overall significance, specific year levels did not differ significantly in their attitudes toward distribution channels.

In contrast, for promotion, a significant difference was observed between first-year and second-year students. First-year students reported a lower attitude level ($\bar{x} = 3.45$), whereas

second-year students rated this aspect higher ($\bar{x} = 4.01$), indicating a stronger attitude toward promotional elements of social marketing.

Faculty

Further analysis was conducted to assess whether students' attitudes toward the social marketing mix varied by faculty. The one-way ANOVA results revealed statistically significant differences at the .05 level in all four components: product, price, place, and promotion, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA Results of Attitudes Toward the Social Marketing Mix by Faculty

Variable	F	Sig.
Product	2.37	.03*
Price	2.88	.01*
Place	3.83	.00*
Promotion	2.90	.01*

VI. DISCUSSION

Based on the study of international university students' attitudes toward the social marketing mix, the analysis results aligned with the research objectives and revealed that:

1. The overall attitude levels of international students toward the social marketing mix—specifically product, price, place, and promotion—were found to be high.

This finding is consistent with the study by Madhavedi et al. (2024), which reported that: (1) Product – Consumer attitudes are influenced by product quality, features, and the product's ability to meet customer needs. (2) Price – Pricing strategies are a key factor in forming positive attitudes, especially when customers perceive value for money. (3) Place – Easy access to products through various channels contributes to customer convenience and improves their attitude. (4) Promotion – Effective promotional tools such as advertising, discounts, and loyalty programs enhance customer engagement and foster favorable attitudes. Furthermore, the integration and interaction among these marketing mix elements help reinforce positive perceptions and increase the likelihood of continued product or service usage.

These findings also align with the research of Gao et al. (2022), which found that: (1) Product – In the context of green marketing, consumer attitudes are driven by product innovation and environmentally friendly features, such as the use of sustainable and eco-conscious technologies. (2) Price – Reasonable and value-based pricing of green products leads to greater acceptance and willingness to purchase. (3) Place – Distribution through socially and environmentally responsible channels builds trust in the brand and strengthens positive attitudes toward sustainability. (4) Promotion – Strategies that emphasize environmental responsibility and awareness effectively shape positive attitudes toward green products. Positive consumer attitudes toward the green

marketing mix not only promote satisfaction and product acceptance but also support innovative and socially responsible development.

In addition, these findings are supported by Bryła et al. (2022), who found that: (1) Product – Consumers develop favorable attitudes toward sustainable products when social media is used to communicate information about product sustainability and highlight environmental value. (2) Price – Social media communication enhances consumer perception of value, especially when showcasing the environmental impact of their purchase, which strengthens attitudes toward the price aspect. (3) Place – Promoting sustainable and socially responsible distribution channels via social media boosts positive attitudes toward purchasing from such outlets. (4) Promotion – Using social media as a tool to encourage sustainable consumption—such as through campaigns highlighting ways to reduce environmental impact—positively shapes consumer attitudes toward both products and sustainable brands. Ultimately, leveraging social media in marketing efforts for sustainable consumption helps strengthen consumer attitudes toward the marketing mix and encourages greater participation in responsible consumption behaviors.

2. A Comparison of Attitudinal Differences Among International University Students Toward the Social Marketing Mix by Gender, Age, Program, Year Level, and Faculty

The analysis revealed that differences in gender, type of program, and faculty were associated with significant variations in students' attitudes toward the social marketing mix—specifically in price, place, and promotion. These findings align with the research by Mehta (2020), who investigated gender-based differences in consumer decision-making, particularly in areas such as hedonism, novelty consciousness, price value consciousness, and brand loyalty orientation. The study found that: (1) Female students scored higher than male students and tended to prioritize pleasure or enjoyment in marketing activities and product selection. (2) Female showed greater interest in novelty, indicating a stronger enthusiasm for exploring or trying new products or services than men. (3) Female were also more price-conscious, showing greater caution when considering product pricing and value, suggesting that they emphasized cost-effectiveness more during their decision-making process. Additionally, the study found no significant gender difference in attitudes toward the product component of the marketing mix, supporting Mehta's (2020) findings that both men and female showed similar levels of brand loyalty. Truong (2025) also examined how gender and cultural background affect consumer emotions, suggesting that marketing mix strategies could be adjusted accordingly. The study reported that gender influenced emotional reactions and purchasing decisions, particularly in response to key elements of the marketing mix—price, promotion, and product. Female tended to have stronger emotional responses than men to emotionally driven marketing, such as stimulating visuals or sound in advertisements, while men were more focused on price and product quality. In contrast, female consumers appeared more emotionally responsive to marketing campaigns with affective messaging. Regarding age and year level, the study found no significant differences in students' attitudes toward product, price, place, or promotion, which is consistent with Efendioglu and

Durmaz (2022). Their study explored how perceptions of social media advertisements, particularly on Instagram, influenced advertising value, brand awareness, and brand associations among Generation Y users. It was found that positive ad perception improved both brand awareness and brand connections, while demographic factors such as age and education level (comparable to year of study) had no significant influence on the perceived value of ads or brand relationships.

In this context, the results suggest that age and academic year do not affect attitudes toward the social marketing mix among international students. These findings reinforce the idea that demographics are not decisive factors influencing marketing perceptions among youth in the digital age. This is also consistent with Efendioğlu et al. (2022), who examined the impact of branding on mobile phone purchasing decisions among Generation Y. Based on survey data from both students and faculty, their study found that distribution channels and brand social responsibility did not significantly influence purchasing decisions. Thus, the findings indicate that differences in age and academic level did not affect students' attitudes toward product, pricing, distribution, or promotion within the social marketing mix. Moreover, demographic characteristics—such as age or student status—had no measurable effect on attitudes or marketing-related decision behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that Efendioğlu et al.'s (2022) research supports the idea that age and year level do not determine student attitudes toward social marketing strategies, especially in relation to distribution channels and brand social responsibility, aligning with both statistical and behavioral perspectives. Similarly, the study by van Deventer and Saraiva (2025) found that perceived value of social media advertisements among Generation Y was influenced more by content quality, credibility, and entertainment, rather than demographic variables. Their findings suggested that factors such as age, gender, or education level had no significant effect on how consumers evaluated the value of advertisements. In summary, differences in age and academic year did not lead to significant variations in attitudes toward product, price, place, or promotion in the social marketing mix. This implies that demographic attributes do not strongly influence marketing perceptions and attitudes among digital-native youth. These results support the notion that age and year of study are not key determinants of student attitudes toward social marketing components, including promotional strategies, product preferences, or distribution methods.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Suggestions for Applying Research Findings

Although the study was carefully designed and systematically conducted, certain limitations should be noted:

1) Designing social marketing strategies tailored to the target audience:

Since the findings indicate that students generally hold a high level of positive attitude toward the social marketing mix—especially in the areas of promotion and pricing—social enterprises or organizations involved in social activities should focus on crafting promotional strategies that

effectively reach student groups. Examples include the use of social media platforms, creative engagement activities, or campaigns that deliver social value alongside reasonable pricing, in order to encourage greater participation.

2) Developing institutional policies to support social marketing in education:

Educational institutions can utilize these findings to enhance student development programs or curricular content that promotes understanding of the role of social marketing. This may involve integrating social responsibility themes into elective courses or organizing activities that connect classroom learning with community-focused initiatives.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

1) Expanding the sample to other universities or regions:

This study focused on students at one international university located in Saraburi Province. Future research should include participants from other international universities in both central and regional areas of the country. This would enable a more comprehensive comparison of cultural and contextual differences in how students perceive social marketing.

2) Incorporating qualitative analysis:

While this study relied on quantitative survey methods, future research could benefit from the addition of qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions. These methods would provide deeper insights into students' motivations, attitudes, and experiences with social marketing campaigns—leading to more precise and actionable strategic recommendations.

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