

Key Promotion Mix Elements Influencing Consumer Behaviour in Urban Public Transportation: A Case Study of ETUSB

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Abstract:

This study evaluates the effectiveness of promotional strategies implemented by ETUSB, a leading public transport operator based in Batna, in shaping passenger behaviour and enhancing brand perception. Personal selling emerged as the most impactful tool, fostering trust and loyalty, followed by public relations, which strengthened ETUSB's image through meaningful engagement. Advertising and sales promotions, however, demonstrated limited influence, highlighting a need for more targeted and resonant strategies. Despite the moderate success of ETUSB's promotional efforts, the findings highlight significant gaps in aligning strategies with passenger expectations. Recommendations focus on refining messaging and expanding the use of digital channels to improve engagement and satisfaction.

Keywords: Promotion Mix; Consumer Behaviour; Urban Public Transportation; Marketing Strategies; ETUSB.

JEL Classification Codes: M31, R41, L91

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban public transportation systems are indispensable for fostering mobility, alleviating traffic congestion, and reducing environmental impact in rapidly expanding cities (Huang, 2024). As urbanization intensifies, public transport providers face the dual challenge of meeting diverse passenger needs while encouraging greater adoption of their services. With the increasing complexity of urban transport systems, providers must adapt their strategies to enhance service accessibility and customer satisfaction. This evolving landscape highlights the importance of marketing strategies, particularly the promotion mix, in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours to sustain and grow ridership, ensure competitive advantage, and strengthen brand loyalty (Mark, Alexei, & Victor, 2018).

The promotion mix serves as a crucial tool for engaging customers and enhancing service appeal (Sebayang, 2024). While its effectiveness has been extensively explored in commercial contexts, the application of the promotion mix within public transportation, particularly in influencing consumer behaviour, remains under-researched (Sandyasari, 2020). Consumer choices in this domain are influenced by various factors, including demographic attributes, promotional engagement, and perceptions of service quality (Cirianni, Leonardi, & Iannò, 2021). Understanding how these factors interact can provide valuable insights for optimizing marketing strategies in urban transportation.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the recognized potential of promotional strategies in driving consumer behaviour, little is known about how specific elements of the promotion mix influence passenger choices in urban public transportation. The Public Enterprise for Urban and Sub-Urban Transportation in Batna (ETUSB) operates in a highly competitive market where effective marketing is crucial for building customer loyalty, increasing ridership, and improving overall service quality. On this basis, this research addresses the gap by examining how ETUSB's promotional strategies affect consumers, considering demographic differences, passenger preferences, and the evolving needs of urban commuters.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of ETUSB's promotion mix in shaping consumer behaviour. The specific objectives are:

- To analyse the components of the promotion mix and evaluate passengers' awareness and perceptions of ETUSB's promotional strategies.
- To examine how key promotion mix elements impact consumer behaviour within the framework of ETUSB.
- To provide practical recommendations for enhancing promotional strategies and increasing public transportation usage.

1.3 Structure of the Paper

The paper explores relevant literature on the promotion mix and consumer behaviour in public transportation. It describes the methodology, including the design of the questionnaire, data collection, and analysis procedures. The findings include demographic profiles, an evaluation of promotional strategies, and their impact on behaviour. The discussion addresses the implications of the results, followed by conclusions offering recommendations and suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

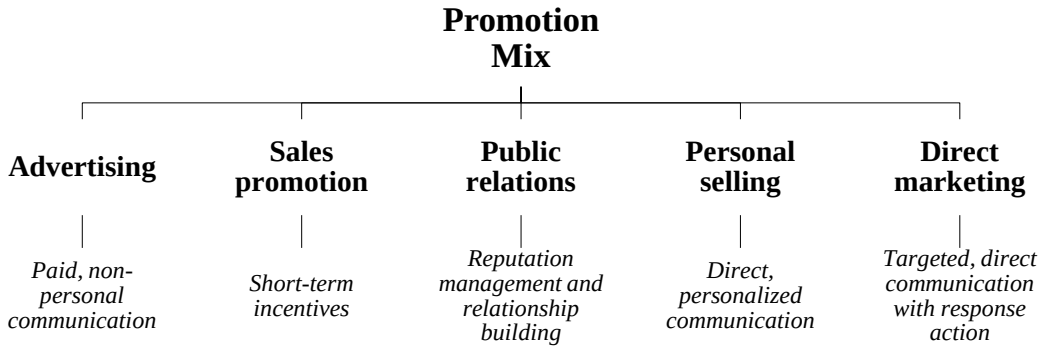
The promotion mix is essential for influencing consumer behavior and boosting public transport usage. Tools such as advertising, public relations, and digital marketing influence perceptions and foster loyalty. Understanding consumer behavior, which is driven by convenience, cost, service quality, and environmental awareness, is crucial for crafting marketing strategies that align with passenger needs.

2.1 Conceptualizing the Promotion Mix

The promotion mix is a cornerstone of any marketing strategy, incorporating key tools such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing (Sebayang, 2024). Each of these elements serves a distinct function, playing a pivotal role in influencing consumer behavior, enhancing brand awareness, and shaping perceptions. In the context of urban public transportation, leveraging an effective promotion mix is especially important for building positive

perceptions, boosting ridership, and ensuring customer loyalty (Išoraitė, Jarašūnienė, & Samašonok, 2023). These tools collectively contribute to a stronger market presence.

Fig.1. Essential elements of the promotion mix



Source: Author

Advertising encompasses the use of paid media channels such as television, radio, and digital platforms to effectively communicate the benefits of a service. Research indicates that advertising plays a key role in promoting sustainable mobility choices, particularly in urban transportation, by influencing consumer decision-making and encouraging the adoption of environmentally friendly travel options (Išoraitė, Jarašūnienė, & Samašonok, 2023). Sales promotion, on the other hand, includes various incentives such as discounts, special offers, and loyalty programs, which serve as powerful tools in motivating increased public transportation usage and enhancing customer retention (Rena, Agus, & Heny, 2023).

Public relations play a crucial role in enhancing the reputation of urban transport services by engaging in activities such as community outreach, media relations, and sponsorships. These efforts help build trust and foster a positive image among passengers, which is essential for long-term success (Buehler, 2009). Personal selling, while less prevalent in this sector, directly influences customer satisfaction through one-on-one interactions between service representatives and passengers, creating a more personalized experience (Akbar, 2023). Direct marketing, through channels like email and social media, enables effective, targeted communication, allowing transport services to connect with groups and

encourage desired behaviors (Išoraitė, Jarašūnienė, & Samašonok, 2023).

2.2 Understanding Consumer Behavior in Public Transportation

Understanding consumer behaviour is crucial for designing transportation services that align with services that meet the needs and preferences of passengers. Consumers' decisions to use public transportation are influenced by a variety of factors, including convenience, cost, service quality, and personal values (Rincon-Novoa, Rojas-Berrio, & Oscar, 2021). These factors often interact, shaping overall satisfaction and loyalty to specific transportation providers.

One of the primary drivers of consumer behaviour is convenience. Commuters are more likely to choose public transportation when it offers easy access, frequent schedules, and minimal delays. The proximity of bus or train stops, as well as the travel time, significantly impacts their decisions (Algers, Hansen, & Tegner, 1975). Furthermore, affordability plays a crucial role, especially for low-income individuals. Offering competitive pricing, discounts, or loyalty programs can appeal to price-sensitive passengers, enhancing the appeal of public transport over other options such as private cars or taxis (Bondemark, Andersson, Wretstrand, & al., 2021).

Service quality also significantly affects consumer choices. Elements such as comfort, cleanliness, punctuality, and safety are key considerations for passengers. Poor service experiences can lead to dissatisfaction, reducing customer retention and increasing the likelihood of switching to alternative modes of transport (Eboli & Mazzulla, 2015).

In addition, social and environmental factors influence consumer behaviour. Many passengers prefer public transportation for its environmental benefits, viewing it as a more sustainable option compared to private cars (Lee, 2024). Public attitudes toward sustainability, urban mobility, and traffic congestion often shape transportation preferences, with growing interest in reducing individual carbon footprints (Punzo, Panarello, & Castellano, 2022).

Understanding these factors is critical for public transport providers seeking to increase ridership and enhance customer loyalty. Addressing

convenience, cost, service quality, and environmental considerations allows public transportation services to meet the needs of consumers effectively.

2.3 The Impact of the Promotion Mix on Consumer Behavior

The promotion mix through advertising, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling, and digital marketing, plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour in public transportation. Each element contributes uniquely to creating awareness, influencing perceptions, and motivating behavioural shifts (Gijsenberg & Verhoef, 2019). In the context of public transport, a strategically designed promotion mix can enhance brand recognition, build trust, and increase ridership.

Advertising serves as the cornerstone of awareness-building by disseminating information through traditional and digital channels. Its effectiveness lies in its ability to reach diverse demographic groups, making it a vital tool for public transport operators targeting broad audiences (Faroqi, Mesbah, & Kim, 2019).

Public relations help establish a positive image and foster trust by highlighting initiatives such as sustainability efforts or community engagement. These efforts resonate with conscious passengers, reinforcing their preference for public transport (Vicente, Sampaio, & Reis, 2020).

Sales promotions, including discounts or loyalty programs, provide immediate incentives for passengers to choose public transport. These strategies have been shown to influence both initial trial and long-term loyalty (Zheng, Ren, Tan, & Chen, 2020).

Finally, digital marketing and social media campaigns are crucial for engaging tech-savvy consumers, especially younger demographics. Interactive campaigns and real-time updates improve user experience and build engagement (Inversini, 2017).

Leveraging a balanced promotion mix tailored to passenger needs enables public transport operators to effectively influence consumer behaviour, fostering greater usage and loyalty.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the impact of promotional strategies on consumer behavior in urban public transportation. A structured survey was employed to gather data from

passengers of the Public Enterprise for Urban and Sub-Urban Transportation in Batna (ETUSB). The methodology encompasses the design, collection, and analysis of data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the variables under study.

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

Data were collected over a three-week period in May 2024 to assess consumer perceptions and behaviours regarding ETUSB's promotional efforts. A structured questionnaire, designed based on the promotion mix framework and consumer behaviour theories, was administered through face-to-face interviews at major transit stations. Likert scales were employed to quantitatively measure passenger responses. This approach enabled a detailed analysis of how different promotional strategies influence consumer behaviour during the specified period, offering valuable insights into the ongoing impact of ETUSB's promotional activities on passenger attitudes and usage patterns.

3.2 Population, Sampling, and Data Analysis

The target population for this study consists of ETUSB passengers in Batna city. A non-probability sampling method was employed, with individuals surveyed during the field study to ensure diverse representation of user experiences. A sample size of 300 respondents was selected to ensure statistical reliability. The collected data were analysed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations. These analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between ETUSB's promotional strategies and consumer behaviour, providing insights into how different strategies influence passenger attitudes and usage patterns.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis offers insights into data from ETUSB passengers, focusing on their demographic profiles, perceptions of the promotion mix, and its impact on behaviour. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the sample, highlighting factors such as gender, age, education, employment status, and transport usage frequency. These findings provide a clear understanding of the passenger base and serve as a foundation for

assessing the effectiveness of ETUSB's promotional strategies.

4.1 Descriptive Profile of the Respondents

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the population utilizing ETUSB services, descriptive statistics were employed to profile the survey respondents. The analysis captures key demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education level, employment status, and frequency of public transport usage. The distribution of these variables provides insights into the diversity and representativeness of the sample.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	162	54.0%
	Female	138	46.0%
Age Group	< 20 Years	45	15.0%
	20–29 Years	120	40.0%
	30–39 Years	78	26.0%
	≥ 40 Years	57	19.0%
Employment Status	Pupil	15	5%
	Student	57	19%
	Employed	177	59%
	Retired	18	6%
	Unemployed	27	9%
Education Level	Primary/Secondary School	81	27.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	165	55.0%
	Master's/PhD	54	18.0%
Frequency of Usage	Daily	138	46.0%
	Weekly	105	35.0%
	Occasionally	57	19.0%

Source: Survey data

The gender distribution indicates a relatively balanced participation, with a slightly higher proportion of males (54.0%) than females (46.0%). This balance suggests that ETUSB services cater to a diverse demographic in terms of gender.

Age-wise, the majority of respondents fall within the 20–29 years category (40.0%), followed by those aged 30–39 years (26.0%). This trend highlights the significant use of public transport among younger and economically active age groups, likely comprising students and early-career professionals.

Education levels reveal that over half of the respondents (55.0%)

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possess a Bachelor's degree, with an additional 18.0% holding advanced degrees (Master's/PhD). This high educational attainment may indicate the appeal of ETUSB services among well-informed individuals who prioritize cost-effective and sustainable mobility options.

Regarding employment status, the majority of respondents (68.0%) are employed, which suggests that ETUSB services cater to individuals who rely on public transport for commuting to work or other professional activities. A significant portion (32.0%) of respondents is unemployed, highlighting that the service is also used by individuals who may rely on it for other purposes, such as education or leisure activities.

Finally, the frequency of service usage shows that nearly half of the respondents (46.0%) are daily users, while 35.0% use the service weekly. These findings suggest a high reliance on ETUSB for routine transportation needs, reflecting its integral role in the city's mobility landscape.

Outlining the demographic characteristics of respondents establishes a foundational understanding of the consumer base, which will be further examined to assess the effectiveness of promotional strategies in subsequent analyses.

4.2 Assessment of Promotion Mix Elements

The effectiveness of ETUSB's promotion mix is evaluated based on passenger perceptions and experiences. Table 2 summarizes the results, revealing patterns in how passengers view different promotional tools.

Table 2. Effectiveness of Promotion Mix Elements of ETUSB

Promotion Mix Elements	Effectiveness				Mean	Std	Rank
	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Very ineffective			
Advertising	8%	22%	45%	25%	2.87	0.92	4
Sales promotion	12%	18%	46%	24%	2.82	0.88	5
Public relations	32%	47%	15%	6%	1.95	0.72	2
Personal selling	45%	38%	10%	7%	1.78	0.64	1
Direct marketing	29%	42%	18%	11%	2.11	0.77	3
Overall mean and standard deviation					2.306	0.79	-

Source: Survey data

According to the survey data, personal selling emerged as the most effective promotional element, with 45% of respondents rating it as "very effective" and an additional 38% as "effective," resulting in a mean score of 1.78 (Std = 0.64). This indicates that direct interactions, such as communication with ETUSB staff, play a pivotal role in engaging passengers and enhancing their satisfaction. Personal selling fosters a sense of loyalty and trust, as it offers a more personalized experience, which is critical in building stronger connections with passengers.

In comparison, public relations ranked second in terms of effectiveness, with 32% of respondents considering it "very effective" and 47% rating it as "effective." The mean score of 1.95 (Std = 0.72) reflects the positive impact of ETUSB's efforts in community outreach, media engagement, and social responsibility initiatives. These activities not only enhance the organization's reputation but also help build trust with passengers, contributing to a favorable image of ETUSB within the community.

While personal selling and public relations emerged as strong performers, advertising received more mixed feedback. Only 8% of respondents considered it "very effective," while 22% rated it as "effective." However, 45% found it "ineffective," and 25% deemed it "very ineffective," resulting in a mean score of 2.87 (Std = 0.92). This suggests that while advertising does serve as a vehicle for communicating ETUSB's services, its impact on passenger behavior and ridership is limited. This may be attributed to potential issues with the messaging strategy or a disconnect between the advertisement content and passengers' needs and preferences.

Similarly, direct marketing garnered a relatively positive response, with a mean score of 2.11 (Std = 0.77). Of the respondents, 29% considered it "very effective" and 42% rated it as "effective." Digital communication tools, such as email and social media, show promise in engaging specific groups, yet there is room for improvement. Despite the positive ratings, 18% of respondents found these efforts "ineffective," suggesting that the messages may lack clarity or fail to reach a broader audience. Greater focus on targeting and personalization could help boost its effectiveness.

Sales promotions, such as discounts and special offers, were rated the

least effective among the promotional elements, with only 12% of respondents considering them "very effective" and 18% as "effective." Furthermore, 46% found sales promotions "ineffective," and 24% rated them as "very ineffective," yielding a mean score of 2.82 (Std = 0.88). These results suggest that while price incentives may attract some passengers in the short term, they are insufficient in fostering long-term loyalty or in significantly altering passenger behavior.

Overall, the survey findings indicate that while ETUSB's promotional efforts are seen as moderately effective (mean score: 2.72, Std = 0.80), there is considerable room for improvement. Enhancing digital communication channels, refining messaging strategies, and better aligning promotional activities with passenger expectations could significantly increase the effectiveness of ETUSB's outreach efforts.

Finally, when asked whether they believed ETUSB's promotional activities demonstrated a commitment to improving urban transportation, only 24.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates that while some passengers recognize ETUSB's efforts, the promotional activities do not fully communicate the organization's commitment to enhancing urban mobility. To strengthen community connections and clearly demonstrate its dedication to service enhancement, ETUSB must refine its promotional strategies to better align with its broader goals.

4.3 Impact of Promotion Mix on Consumer Behavior

Personal selling emerged as the most influential element in shaping consumer behavior, with 35% of respondents identifying it as a key factor in their decision to use ETUSB services. Public relations closely followed at 28%, highlighting the importance of direct and meaningful communication in shaping passenger perceptions and actions. Together, these findings underscore the role of specific promotional strategies in influencing consumer decisions and setting the stage for deeper analysis.

To further explore the impact of ETUSB's promotional mix, targeted questions were included to assess respondents' perceptions of the organization's efforts. Table 3 summarizes these responses, offering critical insights into how various promotional elements affect consumer behavior. The findings for each promotional aspect are detailed below.

Respondents were asked whether ETUSB's promotional efforts made them likely to recommend the service to others. Results showed that 15% strongly agreed and 22% agreed, while 58% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.53 (Std = 0.88) indicates limited success in encouraging word-of-mouth recommendations. This suggests that current promotional initiatives may require adjustment to better inspire advocacy among passengers.

Table 3. Feedback on Promotional Mix and Consumer Behavior

Feedback	Agreement				Mean	Std
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
Likelihood of recommending ETUSB	15%	22%	58%	5%	2.53	0.88
Improvement in brand perception due to promotion	10%	4%	84%	2%	2.78	0.82
Influence of promotional offers	5%	8%	87%	0%	2.90	0.76
Extent of advertising influence	5%	38%	44%	13%	2.65	0.79
Competitiveness of promotions	5%	49%	31%	15%	2.56	0.80
Motivation to change travel habits	3%	5%	91%	1%	2.90	0.73
Overall mean and standard deviation					2.72	0.80

Source: Survey data

When evaluating whether promotional campaigns improved their perception of the brand, only 10% of respondents strongly agreed and 4% agreed. A notable 84% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 2.78 (Std = 0.82). These results highlight that while promotions may reach the audience, they have not been effective in enhancing the overall brand image.

Promotional offers, such as discounts and loyalty programs, showed an even smaller influence on consumer decisions. Only 5% of respondents strongly agreed and 8% agreed, while 87% disagreed. The mean score of 2.90 (Std = 0.76) suggests that price-based incentives alone are insufficient

to meaningfully impact passenger behavior.

Advertising had a more varied influence on respondents, with 5% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing that it influenced their choice of transportation services. However, 44% disagreed, and 13% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean score of 2.65 (Std = 0.79). These findings suggest a moderate role for advertising, with opportunities to improve its effectiveness through more targeted or engaging campaigns.

Respondents were asked to compare ETUSB's promotional efforts with those of other providers. While 5% strongly agreed and 49% agreed that the promotions were competitive, 31% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.56 (Std = 0.80) reflects a need to strengthen promotional strategies to better compete within the market.

Finally, the ability of promotional campaigns to motivate changes in travel habits—such as frequency or route preferences—was assessed. Only 3% strongly agreed and 5% agreed, while an overwhelming 91% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed. This generated a mean score of 2.90 (Std = 0.73), highlighting the significant challenges in using promotions to influence passenger behavior.

The overall mean score of 2.72 (Std = 0.80) suggests that while personal selling and public relations exhibit moderate effectiveness, the broader promotional mix has yet to fully resonate with passengers. Strengthening the alignment between promotional activities and consumer expectations could lead to greater engagement, improved brand perception, and measurable changes in passenger behavior.

5. DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings from the survey regarding ETUSB's promotional mix, providing insights into the effectiveness of various promotional tools and their impact on consumer behaviour.

In fact, personal selling emerged as the most effective promotional element, reflecting the findings of previous studies that emphasize the importance of direct interaction in fostering consumer trust and satisfaction. The high effectiveness of personal selling in this study aligns with literature suggesting that face-to-face communication can strengthen relationships

and enhance customer loyalty, particularly in service industries. This result underscores the significance of maintaining skilled personnel who can build rapport with passengers, directly influencing their decisions to choose ETUSB's services.

Public relations also performed strongly, corroborating the literature on the role of organizational reputation in consumer behaviour. ETUSB's efforts in community outreach, media engagement, and corporate social responsibility initiatives are key in enhancing the public perception of the organization. The positive feedback from passengers supports the view that such initiatives not only build trust but also establish a favourable brand image, which is critical for long-term customer retention.

In contrast, the lack of advertising and sales promotions received mixed to negative feedback, highlighting a disconnect between ETUSB's promotional efforts and passenger preferences. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that the absence of targeted advertising and promotional incentives limits the ability to effectively influence consumer behaviour. Without consistent and strategically tailored advertising, passengers may remain unaware of the full range of services and benefits offered by ETUSB. Furthermore, the lack of promotional incentives, such as discounts or loyalty programs, fails to engage consumers and encourage repeat usage, ultimately diminishing the impact of ETUSB's efforts to shape passenger decisions and perceptions.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of targeting promotional efforts to specific consumer segments. While direct marketing was positively received, it still faces challenges in reaching a broader audience, as evidenced by the relatively low engagement from some passengers. This suggests the need for a more tailored approach, as personalized marketing can increase engagement and conversion rates.

The study provides valuable insights into ETUSB's current promotional strategies, highlighting areas for improvement. While personal selling and public relations have proven effective, advertising and sales promotions need significant refinement. ETUSB could enhance its efforts by adopting more advertising that aligns its messages with passenger needs and expectations. Likewise, shifting from short-term price incentives to

long-term relationship-building strategies could improve the effectiveness of sales promotions.

Furthermore, ETUSB's promotional strategies should better reflect its commitment to service enhancement and urban mobility. The relatively low percentage of passengers who feel the organization's promotions reflect this commitment suggests a disconnect between promotional messaging and ETUSB's broader goals. Aligning promotional activities with organizational values could help strengthen connections with the community and reinforce ETUSB's dedication to improving urban transportation.

While the results offer valuable insights, the study has several limitations. First, the sample may not fully represent the entire passenger population, as certain demographics may be underrepresented. Second, the reliance on self-reported data could introduce biases, such as social desirability or recall bias. Future studies could address these limitations by using a more diverse sample and incorporating objective measures of promotional effectiveness.

6. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of ETUSB's promotional mix in influencing consumer behaviour, focusing on personal selling, public relations, advertising, direct marketing, and sales promotions. The findings indicated that personal selling and public relations were the most effective promotional tools, significantly impacting passenger engagement and satisfaction. In contrast, advertising and sales promotions were less effective, suggesting a need for refinement to better align these strategies with passenger preferences and expectations.

The study highlights the importance of direct communication and relationship-building in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. While ETUSB's promotional efforts have had moderate success, there is considerable room for improvement, particularly in refining advertising messages, enhancing digital marketing efforts, and shifting from short-term price incentives to long-term loyalty-building strategies. Furthermore, the results suggest that ETUSB's promotional activities should more clearly reflect its commitment to improving urban transportation, thereby

strengthening community engagement and reinforcing its reputation as a provider of quality services.

Future research in the public transportation sector could explore several areas to deepen our understanding of effective promotional strategies. One avenue would be examining the interaction between promotional efforts and actual service quality, particularly how advertising, public relations, and sales promotions correlate with passenger satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, research could investigate segmentation of passengers based on behaviours and preferences to develop more targeted promotional approaches.

Another important area for future study could be the role of digital marketing and social media in influencing consumer behaviour. Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms, understanding how these channels can be leveraged to enhance passenger engagement would provide valuable insights for improving promotional effectiveness. Finally, research could explore the long-term impact of promotional strategies on passenger loyalty, particularly the sustainability of relationship-building efforts.

In conclusion, while ETUSB's promotional mix has had some success in engaging passengers, there is significant potential for improvement. This study lays the groundwork for further research into the relationship between promotional strategies, service quality, and consumer behaviour, which could help public transportation providers optimize their marketing efforts and foster stronger connections with passengers.

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