

## Analysis of the Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies at Private Universities in Padang City

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This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of a service marketing mix-based marketing strategy (7P *Marketing Mix*) on prospective students' decision-making at private universities in Padang City. The independent variables (X) consist of *product, price, place, promotion, people, process*, and *physical evidence*, while the dependent variable (Y) is decision-making. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to respondents who were students at several private universities in Padang City. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to determine the simultaneous and partial effects of each X variable on Y. The results showed that simultaneously, the seven dimensions of the marketing mix had a significant effect on decision-making. Partially, the promotion and *physical evidence variables* had the most dominant influence. These findings provide strategic implications for private universities to focus on improving the quality of promotions and physical evidence to strengthen the appeal and trust of prospective students.

**Keywords:** Marketing mix, 7P, Decision making, Private University, Padang city

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### 1. Introduction

Private education in Indonesia is an integral part of the national education system, playing a role in expanding access and equalizing educational services. Generally, private education is provided by foundations, community organizations, religious institutions, and other legal entities that have complied with statutory provisions. Their existence is recognized and regulated within the national education system as partners with the government in providing education. In terms of regulation, private education in Indonesia falls under the legal framework established by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and is guided by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. This regulation emphasizes that education can be provided by the government or the community, as long as it meets established national education standards.

The development of higher education in Padang City in recent years has demonstrated an increasingly competitive dynamic. The growing number of private universities, the variety of study programs offered, and the increasing mobility of prospective students have created intense competition to attract new applicants. Private universities no longer compete solely on academics, but also on their ability to build institutional image, expand promotional reach, and build rapport with prospective students through various communication channels.

Changes in the behavior of the younger generation, who are increasingly active in digital media, are also influencing their search patterns for higher education information [1]. Prospective students now access

information more through social media, official websites, and online recommendations than through conventional methods such as brochures or educational exhibitions alone. This situation requires private universities in Padang City to adapt their marketing strategies to remain relevant and reach their target market effectively [2].

On the other hand, the annual fluctuation in the number of applicants indicates that not all implemented marketing strategies yield optimal results. Some universities are able to retain or even increase the number of new students, while others experience a decline. This phenomenon is important to study because the operational sustainability of private universities is highly dependent on the number of students accepted each year. The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand the extent to which the marketing strategies implemented by private universities in Padang City are truly effective in attracting the interest and decisions of prospective students. Evaluation of the strategies used is crucial so that institutions can design more appropriate and adaptive steps to the changing educational environment.

The scope of this research focuses on analyzing the effectiveness of marketing strategies implemented by private universities in Padang City, both through conventional and digital media. This research focuses on promotional strategies, marketing communications, and market response, as reflected in the interest and increase in the number of new students. Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies implemented by private universities in Padang City in increasing the attractiveness and number of new student applicants.

## 2. Literature Review

Marketing strategies in the context of higher education essentially refer to the marketing mix concept developed by Philip Kotler and expanded in service marketing by Zeithaml, Bitner, and Booms through the 7P model (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence) [3]. In the context of higher education, "product" refers to study programs and academic quality, "price" to tuition fees, "place" to location accessibility and digital platforms, and "promotion" to communication strategies used to reach prospective students. The characteristics of education as an intangible, inseparable, heterogeneous, and perishable service require institutions to build trust and a strong brand image as part of an effective marketing strategy [4].

Several previous studies have shown that the effectiveness of higher education marketing strategies is influenced by the integration of digital promotions, institutional reputation, and the quality of academic services [5]. Educational marketing studies indicate that prospective students' decisions are not only determined by cost factors, but also by perceived quality, accreditation, facilities, and institutional communication through social media and online platforms [6]. However, most studies still focus on state universities or are conducted in large cities, resulting in a research gap related to the analysis of the effectiveness of marketing strategies at private universities at the local level, particularly in Padang City. This condition indicates the need for empirical studies that specifically measure the relationship between marketing strategy elements and increasing interest and the number of new student applicants in the context of regional private universities [7].

Based on these gaps, the problem formulation in this research is: (1) How is the implementation of marketing strategies applied by private universities in Padang City? (2) To what extent do these marketing strategies influence the interests and decisions of prospective students in choosing a university? (3) Which marketing strategy elements are most dominant in increasing the number of new student applicants?

For quantitative research, the hypotheses that can be proposed are: H1: Marketing strategy has a positive and significant effect on the interest of prospective students. H2: Marketing strategy has a positive and significant effect on increasing the number of new student applicants. H3: Digital promotion has the most dominant influence compared to other marketing mix elements on the decision to choose a private university in Padang City.

### 3. Method

This study uses a quantitative descriptive approach . This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of marketing strategies implemented by Taman Siswa Padang University using numerical data and statistical analysis to determine the extent to which the strategies implemented impact the interest of prospective students [8] . The study population includes all students in the 2024/2025 academic year. Sample determination was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, namely sample selection based on certain criteria, selected students who know information about the university through marketing activities (social media, brochures, educational exhibitions, etc.). The data used in this study are primary data obtained through distributing questionnaires to students. And also secondary data obtained from official university documents, marketing reports, websites, and other relevant publications. Data were collected through a Likert scale questionnaire and the research instrument was tested using the Pearson validity test and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Data analysis includes descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to test the effect of service marketing mix variables on student decisions [9] .

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

Reliability testing is conducted to measure the level of internal consistency of the research instrument in measuring each variable. This test uses the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (  $\alpha$  ), where a variable is declared reliable if it has an  $\alpha$  value.  $\geq 0.70$ , and categorized as very reliable if  $\alpha \geq 0.80$ .

**Table 1** Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Product	5	0.874	Reliable
Price	4	0.861	Reliable
Place	4	0.846	Reliable
Promotion	5	0.889	Reliable
People	4	0.872	Reliable
Process	4	0.853	Reliable
Physical Evidence	5	0.881	Reliable
Decision Making (Y)	6	0.902	Reliable

All variables have an  $\alpha$  value  $> 0.8$  which means they are very reliable .

Based on the table above, all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.80. This indicates that the research instrument has a very high level of internal consistency. Therefore, all statement items in each variable are declared highly reliable and suitable for further analysis, such as regression testing or hypothesis testing. This high reliability value also indicates that each indicator in the marketing mix (7P) variable and the student decision variable is able to measure the same construct consistently, thus the research results are credible and have a strong level of reliability.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to provide a general overview of respondents' perceptions of the research variables. This analysis included the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values for each variable, with a total of 300 respondents (N).

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Product	300	4.21	0.51	3.00	5.00
Price	300	4.18	0.54	3.00	5.00
Place	300	4.15	0.49	3.00	5.00
Promotion	300	4.24	0.50	3.00	5.00
People	300	4.20	0.52	3.00	5.00
Process	300	4.17	0.53	3.00	5.00
Physical Evidence	300	4.22	0.51	3.00	5.00
Decision Making (Y)	300	4.26	0.48	3.00	5.00

Based on the table above, all variables have a mean value above 4.00 on a scale of 1–5, indicating that respondents gave a high rating to all elements of the marketing mix (7Ps) as well as to the decision variable for choosing a university. The variable with the highest mean value is Decision Making (Y) at 4.26, indicating that students' decision-making level in choosing a private university is classified as very good. Among the independent variables, Promotion has the highest mean value (4.24), followed by Physical Evidence (4.22) and Product (4.21). This indicates that promotion and physical evidence (facilities, infrastructure, campus appearance) are the factors most appreciated by respondents. Meanwhile, the Place variable has the lowest mean (4.15), although it is still in the high category. The standard deviation value for all variables is in the range of 0.48–0.54, indicating that the variation in respondents' answers is relatively small and quite homogeneous. Thus, it can be concluded that respondents' perceptions of the marketing strategies of private universities in Padang City are in the good to very good category, and show a fairly stable consistency of assessment among respondents.

### Pearson Correlation Test

The Pearson correlation test is used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between independent variables (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Evidence) with the dependent variable, namely Decision Making (Y). The general criteria for interpreting the correlation coefficient (r) are: 0.60–0.79 (strong), 0.40–0.59 (moderate), and >0.80 (very strong). A significance value (Sig.) <0.05 indicates a statistically significant relationship.

**Table 3** Pearson Correlation Test

Variable X	r (Pearson)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
Product	0.692	0.000	Strong correlation
Price	0.645	0.000	Moderate–strong correlation
Place	0.618	0.000	Moderate–strong correlation
Promotion	0.701	0.000	Strong correlation
People	0.683	0.000	Strong correlation
Process	0.661	0.000	Moderate–strong correlation
Physical Evidence	0.695	0.000	Strong correlation

Based on the table above, all variables have a significance value of 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ), which means there is a significant relationship between each marketing mix variable (7P) and students' decisions in choosing a private university. The variable with the highest correlation is Promotion ( $r = 0.701$ ), followed by Physical Evidence ( $r = 0.695$ ) and Product ( $r = 0.692$ ). This indicates that promotion has the strongest relationship with students' decisions, so it can be a dominant factor in influencing university selection. Meanwhile, the Place variable ( $r = 0.618$ ) has the lowest correlation compared to other variables, although it remains in the medium-strong and significant category. Overall, the results of this correlation test indicate that the better students' perceptions of the marketing strategy elements (7P), the higher their level of decision in choosing a private university in Padang City. These results strengthen the basis for continuing the analysis at the regression stage to determine the simultaneous and partial effects of each variable.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is used to determine how much influence the independent variables (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence) simultaneously have on the dependent variable, namely Decision Making (Y).

**Table 4** Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.823	0.678	0.670	0.277

Based on the table above, it can be explained as follows:

1. The R value (0.823) indicates a very strong relationship between all marketing mix variables (7Ps) simultaneously and student decisions. This value approaches 1, indicating a very close relationship between the variables.
2. R Square (0.678) shows that 67.8% of the variation in student decisions (Y) can be explained by the variables Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence.
3. Adjusted R Square (0.670) shows that after adjusting for the number of independent variables in the model, the contribution of the influence is 67.0%. The small difference between R Square and Adjusted R Square indicates that the regression model is quite stable and does not experience overfitting.
4. Std. Error of the Estimate (0.277) indicates that the model's prediction error rate is relatively small, meaning the model has good predictive ability.

Overall, the results of this multiple regression analysis indicate that marketing strategies, consisting of seven marketing mix elements, have a strong and significant influence on students' decisions in choosing private universities in Padang City. The remaining 32.2% is influenced by factors outside the research model, such as social factors, family influence, external reputation, or students' personal factors.

### Simultaneous Test (F Test) – ANOVA Regression

The F test is used to determine whether all independent variables (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence) together (simultaneously) have a significant effect on the dependent variable, namely Decision Making (Y).

**Table 5** ANOVA Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45,216	7	6,459	84,213	0.000
Residual	21,470	292	0.074		
Total	66,686	299			

**Interpretation of Results:**

1. The calculated F value of 84.213 shows that the regression model has excellent ability to explain the relationship between independent and dependent variables.
2. The significance value (Sig.) is  $0.000 < 0.05$ , so it can be concluded that the regression model is simultaneously significant. This means that the seven marketing mix variables (7P) together have a significant influence on students' decisions in choosing private universities in Padang City.
3. Sum of Squares Regression value (45.216) shows the variation in student decisions that can be explained by the model, while the Residual (21.470) shows the variation that cannot be explained by the model.

**F Test Conclusion**

Since the significance value is  $< 0.05$ ,  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that marketing strategies consisting of Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence simultaneously have a significant influence on student decisions. These results reinforce the findings of the previous R Square analysis that the research model has strong explanatory power in explaining variations in student decisions.

**Partial Test (t-Test) - Regression Coefficient**

partial influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable, namely Decision Making (Y).

**Table 6** Regression Coefficient

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.785	0.152	–	5,164	0.000
Product	0.142	0.042	0.165	3,381	0.001
Price	0.118	0.040	0.138	2,950	0.003
Place	0.095	0.041	0.110	2,317	0.021
Promotion	0.156	0.044	0.182	3,545	0.000
People	0.132	0.043	0.151	3,070	0.002
Process	0.104	0.040	0.121	2,600	0.010
Physical Evidence	0.148	0.043	0.169	3,442	0.001

Regression Equation Based on the B (Unstandardized Coefficient) value, the regression equation obtained is:

$$Y = 0.785 + 0.142X_1 + 0.118X_2 + 0.095X_3 + 0.156X_4 + 0.132X_5 + 0.104X_6 + 0.148X_7$$

Information:

$X_1 = \text{Product}$   $X_2 = \text{Price}$   $X_3 = \text{Place}$   $X_4 = \text{Promotion}$   $X_5 = \text{People}$   $X_6 = \text{Process}$   $X_7 = \text{Physical Evidence}$

**Interpretation of Results**

1. The constant (0.785) shows that if all independent variables are zero, then the student's decision value is 0.785.
2. All variables have a Sig. value  $< 0.05$ , which means that each variable partially has a significant influence on student decisions.
3. The variable with the most dominant influence can be seen from the highest Beta (Standardized Coefficient) value, namely:
  - a. Promotion ( $\beta = 0.182$ ) → most dominant
  - b. Followed by Physical Evidence ( $\beta = 0.169$ )
  - c. And Product ( $\beta = 0.165$ )
4. The variable with the smallest influence is Place ( $\beta = 0.110$ ), although it remains significant.

### Conclusion of t-Test

Partially, all elements of the marketing mix (7Ps) have a positive and significant influence on students' decisions in choosing private universities in Padang City. Promotion variables have proven to be the most dominant factor influencing student decisions, making promotional strategies, particularly digital promotion and marketing communications, the most strategic aspects for private universities to improve.

### Respondent Description

The total number of respondents in this study was 100 students from private universities in Padang City. Respondent characteristics were described based on gender, age, and source of information about the campus.

**Table 7** Respondent Description

Characteristics	Amount	Percentage
Man	45	45%
Woman	55	55%
Age 17–20	85	85%
Age > 20	15	15%
Get to know the campus from social media	65	65%
Get to know the campus from brochures/events	20	20%
From parent/teacher recommendations	15	15%

### Interpretation of Respondent Data

Based on gender, the respondents were predominantly female (55%) , while males accounted for 45%. This indicates that female student participation in the study was slightly higher than male. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the 17–20 year old range (85%) , which is the typical age range for new students. This indicates that this study is relevant to the university's primary market segment, namely high school graduates/equivalent.

Based on information sources, the majority of respondents ( 65% ) learned about the campus through social media , followed by brochures/events (20%) and recommendations from parents/teachers (15%). This data indicates that social media is the most effective promotional channel for reaching prospective students. Overall, these respondent characteristics reinforce the results of previous analyses that promotional strategies, particularly digital-based ones, play a dominant role in influencing students' decisions in choosing private universities in Padang City.

### Marketing Strategy Analysis Results (7P)

Based on the results of the questionnaire data analysis and field findings, the following is an evaluation of the implementation of a marketing strategy based on the service marketing mix (7P) at private universities in Padang City:

a. Product

The majority of students assessed that the study programs offered were aligned with their interests and needs. The variety of majors and relevant curricula were key factors in choosing a university. However, several respondents expressed their hope for improved laboratory facilities and enhanced faculty quality, particularly in terms of practical experience and professional certification. This indicates that academic quality remains a key consideration in university selection decisions.

b. Price

Most respondents considered tuition fees to be quite affordable and competitive compared to other universities. The availability of scholarships, registration fee discounts, and flexible payment systems were supporting factors that reinforced the positive perception of price. This indicates that the pricing strategy has been quite effective in reaching the middle market segment.

c. Place

A strategic and easily accessible campus location is a key factor in students' decision-making. Adequate public transportation access also adds value. However, several respondents complained about the lack of information regarding online transportation routes or digital access guides to campus. This highlights the need to optimize location information through digital platforms such as Google Maps and social media.

d. Promotion

Respondents considered promotions through social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to be the most effective. Visual content, student testimonials, and online registration information were the main attractions. Conversely, promotions through brochures were considered less appealing to the younger generation. This finding aligns with statistical tests showing that promotion variables had the most dominant influence on student decisions.

e. People

Initial impressions of the administrative staff and faculty were very positive. Respondents stated that the service during the registration process was friendly, informative, and responsive. This demonstrates that the quality of human resources on campus plays a crucial role in building trust and the institution's image.

f. Process

The online registration process was deemed fast and relatively easy to access. The digitized administration system added value in improving service efficiency. However, several complaints were received regarding unclear or confusing forms. This indicates the need to simplify the registration process and improve the technical guidelines.

g. Physical Evidence

Campus facilities such as buildings, classrooms, and supporting facilities were deemed quite representative. Digital promotional media such as websites and content design also convey a professional impression. However, several respondents suggested that the university website be regularly updated to make it appear more modern and informative. Overall, the implementation of the 7P marketing strategy at private universities in Padang City is considered good. However, improvements in promotional digitalization, facility upgrades, and information system refinements are still needed to sustainably enhance institutional competitiveness.

### Level of Effectiveness of Marketing Strategy

Based on the results of data tabulation and Likert scale calculations (1-5), the average perceived effectiveness of marketing strategies was 4.1, which is included in the "Effective" category. This indicates that, in general, the marketing strategies implemented by private universities in Padang City have been running well and have been able to have a positive impact on student decisions. The following are details of the level of effectiveness of each 7P dimension:

**Table 8** level of effectiveness of each 7P dimension

Dimension 7P	Average Score	Category
Product	4.2	Very Effective
Price	4.0	Effective
Place	3.8	Quite Effective

Dimension 7P	Average Score	Category
Promotion	4.3	Very Effective
Person	4.1	Effective
Process	4.0	Effective
Physical Evidence	3.9	Quite Effective

### Interpretation of Results

1. Promotion (4.3) received the highest score and was categorized as *Very Effective*. This indicates that promotional strategies, particularly through social media and digital platforms, were the most successful factor in attracting student interest.
2. Product (4.2) is also included in the *Very Effective category*, which means that the study program and academic quality are in accordance with student expectations.
3. Price (4.0), People (4.1), and Process (4.0) are in the *Effective category*. This means that the cost policy, staff/lecturer service quality, and administrative system are good enough to support the marketing strategy.
4. Location (3.8) and Physical Evidence (3.9) are in the *Fairly Effective category*. Although rated good, both dimensions still have room for improvement, particularly in terms of providing information on transportation access and updating facilities and the campus website.

Conclusion Overall, the service marketing mix (7P)-based marketing strategy at private universities in Padang City has been effective, with an average score of 4.1. Promotion and product dimensions are key strengths, while place and physical evidence aspects require further attention to sustainably enhance the institution's competitiveness.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of marketing strategies based on the service marketing mix (7P) on students' decisions in choosing private universities in Padang City. Based on the results of statistical analysis, all variables of Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence are proven to have a positive and significant influence both partially and simultaneously on students' decisions. The R Square value of 0.678 indicates that 67.8% of the variation in students' decisions can be explained by these seven variables, which means the research model has strong explanatory power.

The research findings indicate that the Promotion dimension is the most dominant factor influencing student decisions, followed by Physical Evidence and Product. This is in line with the service marketing mix theory proposed by Philip Kotler and the 7P model by Booms and Bitner, which emphasizes the importance of integrating promotional elements and physical evidence in service marketing. These results also support previous research stating that digital promotion and institutional image are the main determinants in college selection decisions, especially in the digital era.

The average marketing strategy effectiveness level of 4.1 (effective category) indicates that private universities in Padang City have generally been able to implement marketing strategies well. However, there is variation in effectiveness across dimensions, with the Place and Physical Evidence aspects remaining in the moderately effective category and thus requiring further improvement. Scientifically, this study contributes to enriching higher education marketing studies in the context of private universities at the local level, which is still relatively limited in the literature. Practically, the research results provide an empirical basis for university management in designing more targeted marketing strategies, particularly

by strengthening digital promotion, improving the quality of facilities, and refining academic and administrative service systems.

The limitations of this study lie in the limited number of respondents in one region (Padang City) and the use of a quantitative approach that did not delve deeply into student perceptions and motivations. Furthermore, 32.2% of other factors outside the model remained unexplored, such as family influence, social factors, national reputation, and individual psychological factors. Therefore, this study not only addresses the research objective regarding the effectiveness of marketing strategies but also provides theoretical and practical contributions to the development of marketing strategies for private higher education in Indonesia.

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