

# Optimizing Competitive Advantage of Islamic Madrasahs Through the 7P Marketing Mix: A Comparative Study with ASEAN Perspectives

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## Info Artikel

## Abstract

### Keywords:

7P Marketing Mix, Competitive Advantage, Islamic Madrasah

Competition among senior high schools in Indonesia is intensifying, thus encouraging Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN), as a state Islamic senior high school, to adopt more systematic, transparent, and accountable strategies to maintain institutional credibility and stakeholder engagement in an increasingly competitive educational environment. This study aims to analyze the strategic role of the 7P marketing mix: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence in shaping competitive advantage in state Islamic senior high schools. This study used a quantitative, explanatory design and was conducted at one of the madrasahs in Bogor Regency, West Java. Data were collected through a structured, validated questionnaire administered to 203 11th-grade students, who were the primary users of academic and non-academic services. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to test the partial and simultaneous relationships between marketing mix dimensions and competitive advantage. The results show that the 7P marketing mix model simultaneously explains a significant proportion of the variance in competitive advantage ( $R^2 = 0.634$ ). Although all 7P dimensions have a positive and significant relationship, Process, Physical Evidence, and Product emerged as the most dominant predictors. This finding confirms that competitive advantage in public Islamic senior high schools is determined not only by academic achievement, but also by the quality of governance, educational service systems, physical learning environments, curriculum coherence, and an organizational culture aligned with Islamic values. This study confirms the relevance of the 7P marketing mix as an effective managerial framework and recommends strengthening process-based governance, developing infrastructure, and integrating the curriculum to support institutional sustainability.

### Kata Kunci:

Bauran Pemasaran 7P, Keunggulan Bersaing, Madrasah Islam

### Abstrak

Persaingan antar sekolah menengah atas di Indonesia semakin intensif, sehingga mendorong Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) sebagai satuan pendidikan menengah atas Islam negeri untuk mengadopsi strategi yang lebih sistematis, transparan, dan akuntabel guna mempertabahkan kredibilitas institusi serta keterlibatan pemangku kepentingan dalam lingkungan pendidikan yang semakin kompetitif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran strategis bauran pemasaran 7P Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, dan Physical Evidence dalam membentuk keunggulan bersaing pada pendidikan menengah atas Islam negeri. Penelitian ini menggunakan

*pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain eksplanatori dan dilaksanakan pada salah satu madrasah di Kabupaten Bogor, Jawa Barat. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur dan tervalidasi yang diberikan kepada 203 siswa kelas XI sebagai pengguna utama layanan akademik dan non-akademik. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Pearson, dan regresi linier berganda untuk menguji hubungan parsial maupun simultan antara dimensi bauran pemasaran dan keunggulan bersaing. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model bauran pemasaran 7P secara simultan mampu menjelaskan proporsi varians keunggulan bersaing yang cukup besar ( $R^2 = 0,634$ ). Meskipun seluruh dimensi 7P memiliki hubungan positif dan signifikan, Process, Physical Evidence, dan Product muncul sebagai prediktor paling dominan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa keunggulan bersaing pada pendidikan menengah atas Islam negeri tidak hanya ditentukan oleh capaian akademik, tetapi juga oleh kualitas tata kelola, sistem layanan pendidikan, lingkungan fisik pembelajaran, koherensi kurikulum, serta budaya organisasi yang selaras dengan nilai-nilai Islam. Penelitian ini menegaskan relevansi bauran pemasaran 7P sebagai kerangka manajerial yang efektif dan merekomendasikan penguatan tata kelola berbasis proses, pengembangan sarana prasarana, serta integrasi kurikulum untuk mendukung keberlanjutan institusi.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, Indonesia's education system has undergone significant structural and cultural transformation, characterised by the diversification of educational providers, intensifying competition, and heightened public expectations regarding quality, transparency, and accountability. In densely populated provinces such as West Java, schools operate within increasingly saturated educational environments, where public schools, private Islamic institutions, and vocational providers compete for student enrolment and social legitimacy. Parental decision-making has become more selective and evaluative, relying not only on tangible indicators such as academic outcomes and facilities but also on intangible dimensions, including reputation, service experience, and institutional image (Arifin, Artanto, & Rahman, 2020; Ivy, 2001; Munjin, 2022; Novianty, Iriani, & Rosyadi, 2016). Within this context, institutional competitiveness has emerged as a critical concern for educational leaders and policymakers.

Within this competitive landscape, state-funded Islamic senior secondary schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri) occupy a distinctive institutional position. These schools are required to deliver academic standards comparable to those of general public schools while simultaneously preserving a coherent Islamic identity embedded in the curriculum, organisational culture, and daily practices (Abdul Hamid & Musa, 2017; Abdul Karim, Az Zafi, & Rochimuzzama, 2022; AbdulRahman, Warsah, & Murfi, 2019; Wahyuni, Syahza, & Burhanuddin, 2021). This dual mandate introduces managerial complexity, as Madrasah Aliyah Negeri must reconcile public accountability requirements with religious missions while responding to increasing pressures for quality, efficiency, and differentiation within a market-oriented educational environment (Shaikh & Kazmi, 2022). Consequently, reliance on formal state status or faith-based identity alone is no longer sufficient to sustain institutional competitiveness.

In response to these challenges, educational marketing perspectives have become increasingly relevant for explaining how schools create, communicate, and sustain institutional value. One of the most widely applied frameworks in service organisations is the 7P marketing mix, encompassing Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence (Isoraite, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2016). When adapted to educational settings, this framework extends beyond curricular offerings to include service delivery processes, learning environments, stakeholder interactions, and institutional communication. Empirical studies in Islamic education contexts suggest that certain dimensions, particularly Process, Physical Evidence, and Product,

play significant roles in shaping stakeholder perceptions, trust, and institutional reputation (Bitner, 1992; Budiarti & Amin, 2025; Ghufron, Khusnurridlo, Najiburrahman, Baharun, & Muchlis, 2023; Muthoifin, Supriyanto, Shobron, & Mulyadi, 2022; Warpindyastuti, 2019). However, findings across studies remain fragmented and highly dependent on institutional and contextual factors.

Despite growing scholarly attention to educational marketing and competitiveness, important research gaps persist. Existing studies on the 7P marketing mix in Islamic education predominantly focus on private institutions or higher education contexts, while state-funded Islamic secondary schools remain relatively underexamined (Aziz, Hartini, & Gunawan, 2025; Elfindri, Ariyanto, Maryati, & Sari, 2022; Paluseri, Kaihatu, Sutrisno, & Farzana, 2025; Safitri, 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2021). Moreover, prior research often investigates individual elements of the marketing mix in isolation, rather than empirically examining the integrated effects of all seven components within a single institutional setting. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how the 7P marketing mix collectively contributes to competitive advantage in state-funded Islamic senior secondary schools, particularly in regions such as West Java, where Islamic public schools face direct competition from both private Islamic and secular educational providers.

Grounded in the marketing mix framework (Isoraite, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2016) and competitive advantage theory (Porter, 1985) This study aims to examine the relationship between the 7P marketing mix and competitive advantage in a state-funded Islamic senior secondary school in Bogor, West Java. Specifically, the study investigates the individual and combined contributions of the seven marketing mix dimensions to competitive advantage, conceptualised through indicators of reputation, perceived uniqueness, student pride, and willingness to recommend (Abdul Karim et al., 2022; Novianty et al., 2016). By focusing on an underexplored institutional context, this research contributes empirical evidence that extends existing literature on educational marketing and offers practical insights for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen the competitiveness of Islamic public secondary education without compromising its religious ethos.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the predictive associations between the 7P marketing mix Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence and competitive advantage in Islamic senior secondary education. The research was conducted between April and June 2025 at a state-funded Islamic senior secondary school in Bogor, West Java, selected for its strategic position within a highly competitive educational environment where public, private Islamic, and vocational institutions compete for student enrolment (Abdul Karim et al., 2022; Novianty et al., 2016). The target population comprised all Year 11 students enrolled in the 2024/2025 academic year (N = 345). Based on Krejcie and Morgan's sampling formula, a minimum sample size of 181 respondents was required, and data were ultimately collected from 203 students using proportional non-probability (convenience) sampling facilitated through class networks (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 30 items, including 21 items measuring the seven dimensions of the marketing mix and nine items assessing competitive advantage, operationalised through indicators of reputation, perceived uniqueness, student pride, and willingness to recommend (Isoraite, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Porter, 1985). Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) to minimise central tendency bias among adolescent respondents (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal,

2015). Content validity was established through expert review, and a pilot test was conducted to assess clarity and internal consistency; items that failed to meet acceptable criteria were revised or removed. The final instrument demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.844 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data, followed by Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses to examine both the individual and combined effects of the 7P dimensions on competitive advantage. Although Likert-scale data are ordinal in nature, they were treated as interval-level measures to permit parametric analysis, consistent with established practice in educational research (Boone & Boone, 2012; Joshi et al., 2015). Assumption testing confirmed normality and the absence of multicollinearity, with Variance Inflation Factor values below 2.5 and tolerance values above 0.10 (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The empirical findings from the quantitative analysis evaluating the predictive associations between the educational marketing mix comprising Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence and perceived competitive advantage are presented in this section. A total of 203 valid responses were analysed. Descriptive statistics summarising respondents’ perceptions are shown in Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and standard errors indicate that Process and Physical Evidence received higher ratings than the other dimensions.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Marketing Mix Dimensions and Competitive Advantage**

Dimension	Mean	SD	SE
Product	3.21	0.48	0.034
Price	3.13	0.52	0.036
Place	3.27	0.50	0.035
Promotion	3.18	0.53	0.037
People	3.22	0.51	0.036
Process	3.31	0.49	0.034
Physical Evidence	3.35	0.47	0.033
Competitive Advantage	3.29	0.45	0.032

Source: Data Collection, 2025

Pearson’s product–moment correlations were then computed between the seven marketing mix components and competitive advantage. All coefficients were positive and statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), ranging from  $r = 0.471$  to  $r = 0.669$ . The lowest correlation was observed between Price and competitive advantage ( $r = 0.471$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the highest was between Physical Evidence and competitive advantage ( $r = 0.669$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as displayed in Table2

**Table 2. Pearson Correlation between Marketing Mix Components and Competitive Advantage**

Dimension	Pearson r	p-value
Product	0.629	< .001
Price	0.471	< .001
Place	0.519	< .001
Promotion	0.583	< .001

<b>People</b>	0.489	< .001
<b>Process</b>	0.649	< .001
<b>Physical Evidence</b>	0.669	< .001

Source: Data Collection, 2025

To further examine the predictive associations, simple linear regressions were conducted for each marketing mix dimension. All seven models were statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . The standardised coefficients ranged from  $\beta = 0.471$  (Price) to  $\beta = 0.669$  (Physical Evidence), confirming the individual contributions of each dimension. The results are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3. Results of Simple Linear Regression:  
Individual Marketing Mix Dimensions Predicting Competitive Advantage**

Dimension	Standardised $\beta$	t	p-value
<b>Product</b>	0.629	10.23	< .001
<b>Price</b>	0.471	7.64	< .001
<b>Place</b>	0.519	8.29	< .001
<b>Promotion</b>	0.583	9.47	< .001
<b>People</b>	0.489	8.01	< .001
<b>Process</b>	0.649	10.69	< .001
<b>Physical Evidence</b>	0.669	11.15	< .001

Source: Data Collection, 2025

A multiple regression model was then estimated to assess the combined predictive contribution of the seven components to competitive advantage. The overall model was statistically significant,  $F(7, 195) = 48.90$ ,  $p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  value of 0.634, indicating that 63.4% of the variance in competitive advantage was explained collectively. Among the predictors, Product ( $\beta = 0.723$ ,  $t = 6.214$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Process ( $\beta = 0.859$ ,  $t = 9.408$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Physical Evidence ( $\beta = 0.811$ ,  $t = 8.726$ ,  $p < .001$ ) emerged as statistically significant, while Price, Place, Promotion, and People did not reach significance ( $p > .05$ ). These results are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression:  
Combined Influence of 7P Components on Competitive Advantage**

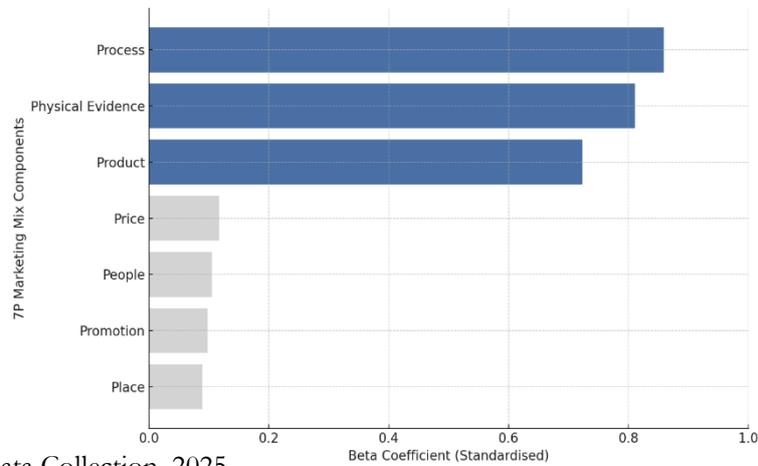
Predictor (7P Component)	Standardised $\beta$	t	p-value
<b>Product</b>	0.723	6.214	< .001
<b>Price</b>	0.117	1.452	.148
<b>Place</b>	0.089	1.129	.260
<b>Promotion</b>	0.098	1.277	.203
<b>People</b>	0.105	1.336	.183
<b>Process</b>	0.859	9.408	< .001
<b>Physical Evidence</b>	0.811	8.726	< .001

Source: Data Collection, 2025

Multiple regression analysis assessed the combined influence of the seven marketing mix components on competitive advantage. The model was statistically significant,  $F(7, 195) = 48.90$ ,  $p < .001$ , with  $R^2 = 0.634$ , indicating that 63.4% of the variance was explained collectively.

The findings are further illustrated in Figure 1, which highlights the relative magnitudes of the predictors. Process, Physical Evidence, and Product yielded the highest standardised coefficients, while Price, Place, Promotion, and People were comparatively weaker.

**Figure 1. Standardised Beta Coefficients of the 7P Marketing Mix Components Predicting Competitive Advantage**



Source: Data Collection, 2025

A summary of hypothesis testing is presented in Table 5. Four hypotheses (H1, H6, H7, and H8) were supported, while the others did not reach statistical significance.

**Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis Testing for the Effects of 7P Marketing Mix Components of Competitive Advantage**

Hypothesis	Statement	B (Standardised)	t	p-value	Result
H1	Product has a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.723	6.214	< .001	Supported
H2	Price has a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.117	1.452	.148	Not Supported
H3	Place has a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.089	1.129	.260	Not Supported
H4	Promotion has a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.098	1.277	.203	Not Supported
H5	People have a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.105	1.336	.183	Not Supported
H6	Process has a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.859	9.408	< .001	Supported
H7	Physical Evidence has a significant effect on competitive advantage.	0.811	8.726	< .001	Supported
H8	The combined 7P components significantly influence competitive advantage.	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.634	F = 48.90	< .001	Supported

Source: Data Collection, 2025

As summarised in Table 5, H1, H6, H7, and H8 were supported, confirming the strategic importance of Product, Process, and Physical Evidence in shaping competitive advantage. The implications of these findings are elaborated in the subsequent section.

## DISCUSSION

### Strategic Core: Process, Physical Evidence, and Product

This study examined the strategic contribution of each component of the educational marketing mix, Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence, towards enhancing the competitive advantage of a state-funded Islamic senior secondary school in Bogor. Regression analyses indicated that the 7Ps collectively accounted for 63.4% of the variance in perceived competitiveness ( $R^2 = 0.634$ ,  $p < .001$ ), validating the framework as a comprehensive managerial model for public Islamic schools (Isoraite, 2016; Porter, 1985). Based on the magnitude and statistical significance of the beta coefficients, a strategic hierarchy was established (Figure 2), comprising Strategic Core elements (*Process, Physical Evidence, and Product*), Latent Potential components (*Promotion and Place*), and Foundational Elements (*People and Price*). This hierarchical framework allows educational leaders to prioritise high-impact dimensions while recognising areas requiring further development.

**Figure 2. Strategic Hierarchy of The 7P Marketing Mix Components**



Source: Data Collection, 2025

Process emerged as the most influential predictor of competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.859$ ,  $p < .001$ ), confirming its strategic importance and aligning with Kotler & Keller (2016) assertion that internal service delivery systems underpin sustainable competitiveness. In the participating institution, Process is operationalised through digitised academic services, real-time feedback mechanisms, and structured counselling, reflecting administrative responsiveness and institutional agility. This aligns with (Fadholi, Zulaikha, & Karilia, 2025), who emphasise the importance of integrated administrative systems in dual-governance institutions under overlapping ministry mandates.

Moreover, embedding religious and bureaucratic compliance within these processes constitutes a distinctive competitive lever. Regional analogues reinforce this interpretation: in Thailand, a private Islamic school integrates operational efficiency with Islamic-national identity (Amalia, Ibrahim, Safriani, & Luebaesa, 2023; Prasarnkarn, 2019), while Brunei's Islamic schools institutionalise Shariah-compliant governance to enhance procedural legitimacy and stakeholder confidence (Haji Dullah & Mabud, 2024). Hence, Process functions not only as a mechanism for operational efficiency but also as a foundation for normative legitimacy and sustained stakeholder trust.

Physical Evidence also exhibited a strong effect on competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.811$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting the hypothesis that well-designed service environments influence stakeholder perception (Bitner, 1992). Observations at the participating institution's well-maintained facilities, ICT infrastructure, and designated religious spaces corroborate this theoretical perspective, signalling professional reliability and moral alignment. This resonates with (Warpindyastuti, 2019) and (Abdul Karim et al., 2022), who argue that physical infrastructure acts as a tangible indicator of institutional credibility and a strategic branding asset. Comparative evidence from Singapore and Malaysia further substantiates that purposeful environmental design enhances stakeholder trust and institutional identity (Abdul Rahman et al., 2019; Amalia et al., 2023).

Product, encompassing curriculum, pedagogy, and programme offerings, was likewise significant ( $\beta = 0.723$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The participating institution integrates the Kurikulum Merdeka with Islamic instruction, ensuring a holistic academic experience aligned with both state and religious mandates. These findings support (Ivy, 2001) and echo regional studies (Muthoifin et al., 2022; Novianty et al., 2016), highlighting the importance of curricular distinctiveness in sustaining stakeholder engagement and competitive differentiation. The product functions both as an instrument of educational delivery and as a symbolic articulation of institutional mission, demonstrating that curriculum design has both strategic and operational implications.

Although Promotion did not show significant statistical results, its strategic potential in the context of education marketing is undeniable. Traditional promotional strategies, such as banners, alumni networks, and religious gatherings, have limited reach. However, as the shift toward digitalization intensifies, educational institutions must adapt by integrating digital media and community-based campaigns into their marketing strategies (Ryńca & Ziaecian, 2021). Such an approach not only extends the institution's outreach but also fosters a more personalized and engaging experience for stakeholders (Ho & Hung, 2008). Digital platforms offer an opportunity to build stronger relationships with prospective students, parents, and alumni, turning Promotion into a central element of institutional identity rather than merely a communication tool. This shift encourages a rethinking of established educational marketing frameworks, integrating digital strategies to meet the demands of the modern era (Abedi & Abedini, 2017).

Similarly, the concept of Place, often understood as merely geographic location or accessibility, can be re-envisioned as a symbol of cultural identity. For Islamic educational institutions, Place can go beyond its physical location to represent a deeper connection to local traditions, values, and religious heritage (Shokrani et al., 2019). By leveraging the cultural and historical context of their surroundings, institutions can create a stronger narrative that resonates with their community and strengthens their brand (Villarruel & Delgado, 2024). This approach not only enhances the institution's competitive advantage but also fosters a sense of pride and belonging among students and their families. The findings suggest that Place should be viewed as a strategic asset capable of influencing perceptions, much like other components of the marketing mix, by adding layers of meaning that appeal to both the intellect and the emotions of stakeholders (Flores Villarruel & Delgado, 2024).

In terms of People and Price, while both are traditionally considered important components in educational marketing theory, the findings indicate that they have a relatively minimal impact in this specific context (Souba et al., 2001). The uniformity in perceived teacher competence, due to national certification systems, means that differences in educator quality are less likely to create a competitive advantage. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, staff competence is more of a hygiene factor, preventing dissatisfaction but not generating competitive

differentiation (Venaik & Midgley, 2019). Similarly, Price, given the institution's tuition-free nature, serves more as a social norm than a distinguishing factor. In this environment, the focus should shift from People and Price to innovations in Process, Product, and Physical Evidence, which are more likely to provide tangible advantages (Yaghoubian et al., 2020). Improving administrative processes, enhancing curriculum coherence, and investing in high-quality physical infrastructure are critical strategies for creating a distinct competitive edge, rather than relying solely on personnel characteristics or pricing strategies (Ivy, 2008).

### **Latent Strategic Potential: Promotion and Place**

Although Promotion did not reach statistical significance in the full regression model ( $\beta = 0.098$ ,  $p = 0.203$ ), it possesses latent strategic potential. Promotional strategies at the participating institution rely on conventional channels such as banners, alumni networks, and religious gatherings, limiting outreach. Theoretical perspectives suggest that integrating digital media and community-based campaigns could strengthen institutional credibility and stakeholder loyalty (Ghufron et al., 2023; Muthoifin et al., 2022). Therefore, Promotion may evolve from a simple communication tool to a core component of institutional identity if strategically enhanced.

Similarly, Place was non-significant in the multivariate analysis ( $\beta = 0.089$ ,  $p = 0.260$ ), yet its strategic relevance persists. Beyond geographic accessibility, Place embodies symbolic and cultural meaning. The participating institution can leverage West Java's Islamic heritage to reinforce its institutional narrative. Regional evidence shows that Place-based branding in Thai Islamic schools fuses geography, culture, and pedagogy to strengthen identity and stakeholder engagement (Amalia et al., 2023). Thus, Place represents an underutilised yet potentially powerful strategic asset.

The People component, reflecting staff and teacher competence, was non-significant ( $\beta = -0.111$ ,  $p = 0.551$ ). This suggests relative uniformity in perceived educator quality due to national certification and quality assurance systems (Setiadi & Muhafidin, 2024; Sukarman, 2022). Consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory, staffing standards act as hygiene factors preventing dissatisfaction but not generating competitive advantage (Bilgin, Hadziahmetović, & Tandir, 2025; Escollada, 2025). Consequently, innovations in Process, Physical Evidence, or Product are more likely to confer a competitive edge than differences in routine personnel characteristics. Price exerted minimal influence ( $\beta = 0.052$ ,  $p = 0.721$ ), reflecting the institution's tuition-free, state-funded nature. These findings align with (Elfindri et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2021), indicating that affordability functions as a social norm rather than a differentiator. Nevertheless, Price may be framed ideologically to emphasise public service excellence and ethical accountability, reinforcing the institution's commitment to accessible, high-quality Islamic education.

To situate findings in a broader context, a regional comparison was conducted across selected Southeast Asian Islamic educational institutions. While the emphasis on individual 7P components varies across national and institutional contexts, certain patterns emerge consistently. In Brunei, Islamic schools operating under the Shariah Penal Code Order 2013 prioritise Process, integrating religious legal frameworks into administrative systems, thereby reinforcing institutional legitimacy (Haji Dullah & Mabud, 2024). In Thailand, private Islamic schools emphasise Process, Product, and Place, embedding local Islamic identity into curriculum and spatial branding (Amalia et al., 2023). Malaysia's state-run Islamic schools demonstrate comprehensive 7P implementation, including tri-curriculum models, professional teacher culture, architectural coherence, and structured admissions, establishing multidimensional competitiveness (Abdul Hamid & Musa,

2017). In Singapore, Process and Physical Evidence are emphasised to maintain institutional trust under strict regulatory oversight (Abdul Rahman et al., 2019).

**Table 6. Comparative 7P Implementation in Southeast Asian Islamic Schools**

Country	Institution/ Case	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Reference
Indonesia	State-Funded Islamic Senior Secondary Schools	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	This Study
Brunei	Islamic Schools (Post-2013 Shariah Reform)	×	×	×	×	×	✓	×	(Haji Dullah & Mabud, 2024)
Thailand	Phatnawitya School (Private Islamic School)	✓	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	(Amalia et al., 2023)
Malaysia	State-Run Schools (JAIS, Selangor)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	(Abdul Hamid & Musa, 2017)
Singapore	State-Regulated Madrasahs (under MUIS governance)	×	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	(AbdulRahman et al., 2019)

*Note:* P1 = Product; P2 = Price; P3 = Place; P4 = Promotion; P5 = People; P6 = Process; P7 = Physical Evidence.

One of the key novelties in this research is the significant potential of Promotion, which is often regarded as a secondary element in educational marketing. This study highlights that although Promotion did not directly contribute to competitive advantage through conventional channels such as banners or alumni networks, there is an opportunity to transform it into a core element that strengthens institutional identity (Lim, 2021). The novelty of this research lies in the emphasis on integrating digital media and community-based campaigns, which have not been widely applied in Islamic educational institutions. By leveraging more efficient and accessible digital platforms, educational institutions can build stronger personal relationships and increase stakeholder loyalty, ultimately enhancing their competitive advantage (Abedian et al., 2021).

Additionally, this research provides new insights into the importance of Place, which is often underestimated in many studies. While Place in the marketing mix is typically viewed as a geographical factor, this study's findings suggest that Place can be a strategic tool for reinforcing cultural and symbolic identity (Mentes & Omarli, 2023). The novelty here is the focus on leveraging Islamic heritage in West Java as part of the institutional narrative, which can create an emotional connection and enhance the institution's appeal to the local community. This approach offers a more holistic view of Place in education branding, combining geographical context and culture with educational values, presenting a fresh perspective compared to conventional views on Place (Mentes & Omarli, 2023; Yaghoubian et al., 2020).

This research also brings a new perspective on the traditional components of People and Price in educational marketing (Venaik & Midgley, 2019). While both elements are typically seen as key factors in educational competition, this study offers a new understanding of how they should be viewed in modern contexts. People, which is often considered a major differentiator in educational competition, was found not to create significant differentiation due to the uniformity of national certification standards (Othman et al., 2020). Similarly, Price, which is considered important in many studies, was not relevant in the context of a tuition-free state-funded institution.

This research suggests that more focus should be placed on innovations in Process, Product, and Physical Evidence components that are more likely to provide a real competitive edge. Thus, this study offers a reframing of how we view People and Price, suggesting that innovations in other areas may be more effective in creating competitive advantages.

### **Reevaluating the Role of the 7P Marketing Mix in Competitive Advantage**

The findings indicate that the 7P marketing mix should be understood as an integrated managerial framework rather than a purely promotional instrument within state-funded Islamic senior secondary schools. The strong explanatory power of the combined model ( $R^2 = 0.634$ ) suggests that competitive advantage is driven primarily by internal governance quality and service delivery systems, particularly Process, Physical Evidence, and Product, rather than by outward-facing promotional activities alone (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Porter, 1985). From a managerial perspective, this implies that school leaders should prioritise process-oriented governance by strengthening administrative responsiveness, procedural clarity, and coherent service integration. Such an inward-focused orientation is consistent with service marketing theory, which emphasises that reliable internal systems underpin stakeholder trust and sustainable competitiveness, especially in public and faith-based educational settings (Isoraite, 2016; Shaikh & Kazmi, 2022).

Moreover, the prominence of Physical Evidence and Product highlights the strategic importance of infrastructure quality and curriculum coherence in signalling institutional credibility and Islamic identity. Well-maintained learning facilities, ICT-supported environments, and clearly designated religious spaces function as servicescape cues that shape stakeholder perceptions of professionalism and moral alignment (Bitner, 1992; Warpindyastuti, 2019). Concurrently, curriculum design that integrates national academic standards with structured Islamic instruction enhances perceived relevance and differentiation in competitive educational markets (Ivy, 2001; Muthoifin et al., 2022; Novianty et al., 2016). Although Price, Promotion, Place, and People did not emerge as dominant predictors in this study, they remain essential as supporting conditions that stabilise institutional performance. In line with competitive advantage theory, these elements operate as threshold factors that prevent institutional disadvantage rather than generate differentiation, and should therefore be maintained at adequate levels alongside targeted investment in high-impact dimensions (Elfindri et al., 2022; Porter, 1985).

The research highlights the latent strategic potential of Promotion, even though it did not emerge as a dominant factor in this study. Traditional views of Promotion often limit it to just being a tool for visibility and communication. However, in today's evolving educational landscape, there is a need for a deeper, more strategic understanding of Promotion. It should no longer be seen as merely transactional but rather as a means to build lasting emotional connections with stakeholders (Chen & Liu, 2019; Mattiello et al., 2024). For Islamic educational institutions, promoting values and identity through digital media and community-driven campaigns offers an opportunity to transcend conventional methods (Nguyen et al., 2025). The challenge lies in institutional readiness to embrace digital transformation, particularly in faith-based organizations that may still rely heavily on traditional forms of promotion. To unlock the true potential of Promotion, institutions must invest in digital literacy among stakeholders and align their marketing strategies with their core values.

The role of Place in educational branding is often underestimated, yet this research emphasizes its significant strategic value. Place is not just about physical location but also about the symbolic and cultural meaning it carries. By leveraging local cultural and religious heritage,

institutions can establish a deeper connection with the community. However, the effectiveness of this strategy raises questions about its scalability (Giantari & Sukaatmadja, 2021). In regions where local culture or religious identity is less distinctive, can Place still serve as a strong differentiator, or is it more effective in specific contexts? Schools must strike a balance between showcasing cultural heritage and innovating to appeal to both local and global audiences. The challenge lies in ensuring that Place does not remain static but evolves with the times, remaining relevant and meaningful to students and the broader community (Goldsmith, 1999).

The minimal influence of People and Price on competitive advantage calls for a reassessment of their roles in modern educational marketing. Traditionally, these elements have been seen as central to attracting students and establishing a strong market position. However, in the context of state-funded Islamic senior secondary schools, where teacher competence is standardized, and Tuition is free, these factors no longer serve as strong differentiators. This realization leads to a broader conversation about moving away from traditional marketing components (Constantinides, 2002). While People and Price remain important for maintaining institutional stability, they are not the drivers of innovation or competitive advantage (Sukaatmadja, 2020). Institutions must therefore focus more on enhancing Process, Physical Evidence, and Product, which directly influence the quality of the educational experience and institutional credibility. At the same time, staff development is essential to embrace innovation, and Price should continue to reflect the institution's commitment to providing accessible and ethical education, but not as the primary competitive lever.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that the application of the 7P marketing mix in state-funded Islamic senior secondary schools significantly contributes to competitive advantage, with primary focus on the elements of Process, Physical Evidence, and Product. The findings indicate that internal factors, such as governance quality and service delivery systems, have a stronger impact on competitive advantage than external factors, such as Promotion and Place, which did not show a significant influence. Specifically, the integrated model explains 63.4% of the variance in competitive advantage ( $R^2 = 0.634$ ), with Process emerging as the most influential predictor ( $\beta = 0.859$ ), followed by Physical Evidence ( $\beta = 0.811$ ), and Product ( $\beta = 0.723$ ). These findings underscore that operational efficiency, the quality of physical learning environments, and curriculum coherence are essential in strengthening institutional credibility and the Islamic identity of the institution. Therefore, educational leaders should prioritize innovation in these internal elements to enhance their competitive positioning in an increasingly competitive educational market.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the contribution of the 7P marketing mix, several limitations must be considered. The research was conducted at a single state-funded Islamic senior secondary school in Indonesia, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational institutions, both locally and internationally. Additionally, the study employed a quantitative approach, which precluded an in-depth exploration of stakeholder perceptions and experiences through qualitative methods. Future research should expand the scope by using multi-site or mixed-methods designs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the 7P marketing mix impacts competitive advantage across various educational contexts. Furthermore, future studies could explore the role of Promotion and Place more thoroughly, especially in the

context of digitalization and place-based cultural branding, which could serve as differentiating factors in the competitive educational landscape.

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