

## IMPLEMENTING MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE ENGLISH COURSE MARKET: A Case Study Of Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to examine how Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan implements marketing mix strategies to achieve competitive advantage in the local English course and bimbingan belajar market. The research employed a qualitative approach, using a purposively selected English teacher as the primary data source, who provided insights into both teaching practices and institutional strategies. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by indicators derived from marketing mix theory (product, price, place, and promotion) and competitive advantage concepts. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, following Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, including data reduction, display, and conclusion verification. The findings indicate that Edulab applies an integrated and student-centered marketing strategy where product differentiation, value-based pricing, strategic location, and relational promotion are interconnected to support student acquisition and retention. The homey learning environment, informal teacher–student interaction, small class sizes, and personalized programs serve as valuable and rare resources, contributing to sustainable differentiation from competitors. Pricing strategies target various student segments, while promotional efforts, including social media, school roadshows, and referral incentives, strengthen credibility and trust. The integrated application of these strategies not only enhances student engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty but also strengthens Edulab's competitive position in the Medan education market. This study implies that effective marketing in educational services should extend beyond promotion to encompass holistic learning experiences, aligning institutional strategies with student needs and expectations, and providing practical guidance for non-formal education institutions seeking sustainable competitiveness.*

**Keywords:** Marketing Strategy, Marketing Mix, Competitive Advantage, English Course Institution, Educational Marketing.

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the ability to communicate in English has become increasingly essential in education, business, and international interaction. English functions as a global language that enables cross-cultural communication and provides access to worldwide knowledge (Crystal, 2003). This perspective is further supported by Kachru (1992), who emphasizes the global spread and diverse functional roles of English across different sociocultural contexts. As a result, the demand for English language learning continues to grow, particularly among students who aim to achieve academic success, perform well in national examinations, and prepare for university entrance tests.

In Indonesia, this increasing demand has contributed to the rapid growth of private educational institutions, especially English-course and *bimbingan belajar* (*bimbel*) centers. Urban areas such as Medan have experienced significant expansion in this sector, with institutions offering a variety of programs designed to enhance students' academic performance and English proficiency (Armstrong & Kotler, 2017). However, this rapid growth has also intensified competition among service providers. In such a competitive environment, institutions are required not only to offer high-quality academic programs but also to implement effective marketing strategies in order to attract and retain students (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Despite the growing importance of marketing in education, most previous studies have primarily focused on formal institutions such as schools and universities (Andriani, 2022). Similarly, Sari (2021) points out that research in this field often overlooks non-formal education sectors. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how private English-course and *bimbel* centers implement marketing strategies, particularly the marketing mix (4Ps), within local competitive contexts. From a theoretical perspective, Porter (1985) emphasizes that competitive advantage is crucial for organizational survival, while Barney (1991) highlights the role of unique and inimitable resources in sustaining that advantage.

In the context of Medan, several well-known institutions such as GO and BEC compete for similar target markets, particularly junior and senior high school students. However, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how the elements of the marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion are applied in practice (McCarthy, 1960), as well as how these elements influence institutional competitiveness in the local education market. This gap indicates the need for more context-specific studies that explore marketing practices in non-formal education settings.

Furthermore, recent international studies suggest that marketing strategies in educational services are closely related to students' learning experiences and institutional sustainability. Ivy (2008) argues that the application of marketing mix elements significantly influences students' decision-making processes when selecting educational institutions. Sultan and Wong (2019) also highlight that service quality, institutional image, and perceived value play important roles in shaping student satisfaction and loyalty, while Alves and Raposo (2010) emphasize the strong relationship between perceived service quality and institutional reputation. However, most of these studies focus on higher education, leaving a gap in understanding how such strategies operate in private English-course and *bimbingan belajar* contexts, particularly in local markets such as Medan.

In addition, the transformation of educational services in the digital and post-pandemic era has further increased the importance of strategic marketing. Educational institutions are now required to adapt not only their teaching methods but also the ways in which they position and promote their services. Students increasingly expect flexible, engaging, and experience-oriented learning environments, making traditional approaches less effective. In this context, private education providers must integrate pedagogical quality with strategic marketing practices to remain competitive. Therefore, examining how institutions respond to

these changing demands becomes highly relevant for understanding sustainable competitiveness.

Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan represents an interesting case, as it offers integrated academic programs combined with a distinctive homey learning environment, small class sizes, and intensive exam-oriented packages. Despite these unique characteristics, there is limited research explaining how such features function as part of a structured marketing strategy and how they contribute to competitive advantage. By analyzing the implementation of marketing strategies at Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan, this study aims to examine how the institution applies the marketing mix elements (product, price, place, and promotion) in its English-course and *bimbingan belajar* programs, as well as how these strategies contribute to achieving competitive advantage in the education market in Medan.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data in this study were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis to interpret and explain the findings systematically. The analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This approach allows the researcher to organize and interpret qualitative data in a structured and meaningful way.

First, data reduction was conducted by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the raw data obtained from the interview. The recorded interview was transcribed, and only relevant information related to marketing strategies and competitive advantage was retained. The data were then coded and categorized based on the theoretical framework, particularly the marketing mix elements (product, price, place, and promotion) and indicators of competitive advantage.

Second, data display involved organizing the categorized data into a structured and systematic form to facilitate interpretation. In this stage, the data were presented descriptively by grouping the participant's responses into categories such as product differentiation, pricing strategies, promotional approaches, and institutional strengths. This organization enabled the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and key themes emerging from the data.

Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were carried out by interpreting the identified patterns and linking them to the theoretical framework. The researcher examined how the implementation of marketing mix strategies contributes to the institution's competitive advantage. The conclusions were continuously verified by re-checking the data to ensure consistency and accuracy, ensuring that the findings were valid, reliable, and aligned with the research objectives.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis of interview data obtained from the teacher participant at Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan. The findings focus on two main aspects: (1) how the institution implements marketing mix strategies based on the 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion), and (2) how these strategies contribute to achieving competitive advantage in the English course and *bimbingan belajar* market in Medan.

The analysis reveals that Edulab applies an integrated and experience-oriented marketing strategy, where each element of the marketing mix is interconnected and designed to support both student acquisition and retention.

### **Implementation of Marketing Mix Strategies (4Ps)**

The findings indicate that Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan implements the marketing mix elements in a structured yet flexible manner, prioritizing a holistic and student-centered learning experience rather than focusing solely on academic delivery. Edulab positions itself

not merely as an English course provider but as an integrated bimbingan belajar institution, combining English learning with broader academic support and university entrance preparation, particularly for UTBK. The program structure is clearly segmented according to student level, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Program and Pricing Structure at Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan

<b>Student Program</b>	<b>Level / Type of Program</b>	<b>Pricing / Fee Range (Approx.)</b>	<b>Notes / Features</b>
Grades 9–11	Semester-based academic support	Rp10–15 million per semester	Focus on school subjects and basic exam preparation
Grade 12 (A12) Regular	– Annual preparation	UTBK Rp24 million per year	Intensive exam preparation
Grade 12 Platinum	– Intensive guarantee	with Rp50 million per year	Medical school guarantee program
Grade 12 Intensive (month)	– Short-term (2- preparation)	UTBK Rp15 million / 3 students	Promotional intensive program

As shown in Table 1, the program and pricing structure reflects a deliberate segmentation strategy that aligns with students’ academic needs and levels. Students in Grades 9–11 are offered semester-based support focusing on subject comprehension and gradual preparation, while Grade 12 students are targeted with more intensive and outcome-oriented programs. The availability of short-term intensive programs further demonstrates flexibility in addressing urgent student needs, particularly those preparing for imminent examinations. Meanwhile, premium offerings such as the Platinum program, which include guarantees for medical school admission under specific conditions, indicate a strong value proposition and results-oriented positioning. This integration between product design and pricing reflects a strategic effort to balance accessibility, differentiation, and perceived quality.

A distinctive feature of Edulab’s product strategy lies in its homey learning concept, where the physical environment is designed to resemble a residential space rather than a conventional classroom. Learning rooms are integrated within a house-like setting and supported by communal facilities such as dining areas, kitchens, and relaxation spaces. This design reduces students’ psychological pressure and creates a more relaxed and engaging learning atmosphere.

In addition, the use of informal teacher titles such as “Akang” and “Teteh” plays an important role in shaping interpersonal dynamics. By reducing social distance between teachers and students, this approach encourages more open communication, active participation, and willingness to express academic difficulties. As a result, the learning process becomes not only academically effective but also emotionally supportive.

The pricing strategy at Edulab further reinforces its positioning by combining segmentation, value-based pricing, and promotional incentives. Tuition fees vary according to program intensity and expected outcomes, allowing the institution to target diverse market segments. At the same time, the pricing structure reflects the perceived value of the programs, particularly in premium packages that emphasize guaranteed results. Promotional strategies such as group discounts and referral rewards increase affordability and encourage peer-based enrolment, creating a balance between exclusivity and accessibility. This approach also supports organic growth, as satisfied students are incentivized to recommend the institution to others.

The place element is equally significant in shaping students’ learning experience and institutional attractiveness. The branch located on Jalan Yos Sudarso is strategically

positioned in a well-known and accessible area, making it convenient for students from various parts of the city. Internally, the learning environment is carefully designed to enhance comfort and focus. Small class sizes, typically consisting of 8–12 students, allow for more personalized instruction and closer monitoring of individual progress. Facilities such as sofa-style seating and well-maintained study spaces support longer and more effective study sessions. In addition, security measures, including CCTV and supervision, contribute to a safe learning environment, which is an important consideration for parents.

In terms of promotion, Edulab adopts a combination of online, offline, and relational strategies, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Promotion Strategies at Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan

Type	Channel / Method	Description
Online	Instagram, TikTok	Program promotion and branding
Offline	School roadshows	Direct presentations and interaction (20–60 minutes sessions)
Word-of-mouth	Student referrals	Reward-based recommendation system
Others	Minimal brochures	Focus on direct engagement rather than print media

As illustrated in Table 2, while digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are utilized for branding and information dissemination, the most impactful promotional strategies are those that involve direct and personal interaction. School roadshows provide opportunities for face-to-face engagement, allowing prospective students to gain immediate information and build trust with the institution. Word-of-mouth promotion, supported by referral incentives, further strengthens this process by leveraging existing student satisfaction to attract new enrolments. The limited use of printed brochures indicates a strategic preference for interactive and relationship-based communication rather than passive promotional methods.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of the marketing mix at Edulab is highly integrated, where each element supports and reinforces the others. Product differentiation, strategic pricing, supportive learning environments, and relational promotion collectively create a comprehensive system that not only attracts students but also enhances their learning experience and satisfaction. This integrated approach plays a crucial role in strengthening Edulab’s position in the competitive education market in Medan.

### **Contribution of Marketing Strategies to Competitive Advantage**

The findings clearly demonstrate that the implementation of marketing mix strategies contributes significantly to Edulab’s competitive advantage in the Medan education market. The product strategy plays a central role in differentiation, as the homey learning environment, informal teacher-student interaction, and personalized teaching approach create a unique experience. These elements enhance student engagement, satisfaction, and emotional comfort, making Edulab stand out from conventional English course institutions.

The pricing strategy further strengthens Edulab’s market position by targeting different student segments through various program options, from regular semester-based courses to premium packages such as the Platinum program. Value-based pricing combined with promotional incentives, including group discounts and referral rewards, increases accessibility while maintaining a perception of quality and exclusivity, appealing to both students and parents.

Place strategy contributes to both functional and psychological value. The branch’s strategic location, comfortable facilities, small class sizes, and secure learning environment improve convenience, focus, and parental trust. These factors not only support effective learning but also encourage student retention, which is essential for sustaining long-term

competitiveness in the education market.

Finally, the promotion strategies complement these efforts by building trust and credibility through direct engagement and peer recommendations. School roadshows allow for face-to-face interaction with prospective students, while word-of-mouth promotion encourages organic recruitment. By integrating product differentiation, value-based pricing, strategic location, and relational promotion, Edulab establishes a multi-layered approach that creates sustainable competitive advantage in a highly competitive market.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan implements marketing mix strategies in an integrated and student-centered manner to strengthen its competitive position in the local education market. Rather than treating product, price, place, and promotion as separate elements, the institution combines them into a cohesive system that emphasizes both academic outcomes and learning experience. This reflects the nature of educational services, where value is not only derived from the content delivered but also from how the service is experienced by students and perceived by parents.

The product strategy stands out as a key differentiating factor. The homey learning environment, informal teacher–student interaction, and personalized teaching approach create a comfortable and engaging atmosphere that goes beyond conventional classroom settings. This supports Porter’s (1985) concept of differentiation, where uniqueness becomes essential in gaining competitive advantage. In addition, these characteristics align with Barney’s (1991) Resource-Based View, as they represent valuable and difficult-to-imitate resources embedded in the institution’s culture. As a result, Edulab is able to offer a distinctive learning experience that enhances both student satisfaction and emotional engagement.

In terms of pricing, Edulab adopts a value-based and segmented approach that allows it to reach different groups of students. The availability of various program options, ranging from regular courses to intensive and premium packages, provides flexibility while maintaining a perception of quality. Promotional incentives such as group discounts and referral rewards further increase perceived value and accessibility. This finding is consistent with Zeithaml et al. (2018), who emphasize that customers’ decisions are strongly influenced by the balance between perceived benefits and costs. Therefore, pricing at Edulab not only functions as a transactional element but also reinforces trust and perceived quality among students and parents.

The place and promotion strategies further support the institution’s competitive positioning. A strategically located branch, combined with small class sizes and comfort-oriented facilities, contributes to both convenience and a positive learning atmosphere. At the same time, promotion strategies that prioritize direct interaction, such as school roadshows and word-of-mouth referrals, prove to be more effective than purely digital approaches. This highlights the importance of relational marketing in educational services, where trust and personal experience play a crucial role in influencing student decisions (Ivy, 2008). These strategies also strengthen the institution’s credibility and long-term relationships with its students.

Overall, the integration of the marketing mix elements demonstrates that Edulab applies a holistic approach that connects student experience, value perception, and institutional strategy. By focusing on both functional and emotional aspects of learning, the institution is able to maintain competitiveness in a highly competitive local market. This study contributes to the literature by showing how marketing mix theory can be effectively applied in non-formal education contexts, particularly in private English-course and *bimbingan belajar* institutions, where success depends not only on attracting students but also on sustaining their engagement and satisfaction over time.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Edulab Yos Sudarso Medan effectively applies marketing mix strategies to achieve competitive advantage in the local education market. The integration of product differentiation, value-based pricing, strategic location, and relational promotion creates a unique and student-centered learning experience. This approach enhances student engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty within the institution. Edulab's positioning as an integrated bimbingan belajar institution allows it to address both academic and emotional needs of students. The homey learning environment, small class sizes, and personalized teaching approach serve as valuable and rare resources that support sustainable differentiation.

Furthermore, the study highlights that marketing strategies in educational services extend beyond mere promotion to encompass the overall learning experience. The combination of well-structured programs, accessible facilities, and effective communication ensures that Edulab attracts and retains students. These strategies contribute to strengthening long-term institutional sustainability in a competitive market. The findings also show that integrating experiential elements into marketing increases perceived value and student trust. Therefore, aligning marketing strategies with student needs and learning experiences is essential for maintaining competitiveness in non-formal education.

### Suggestion

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Edulab continues to innovate its programs and learning environment to maintain differentiation. Expanding personalized learning options, introducing new exam-oriented packages, or integrating digital learning tools could enhance the value offered to students and strengthen Edulab's competitive position. Additionally, continuous monitoring of competitors and market trends will help the institution adapt its pricing, promotion, and program design to meet evolving student expectations.

It is also suggested that Edulab further develops its promotional strategies by leveraging digital platforms more effectively, including interactive social media campaigns and online referral programs. Strengthening collaboration with schools and other educational institutions may expand its reach and credibility. Finally, systematically collecting and analyzing student feedback can guide continuous improvement, ensuring that marketing strategies remain aligned with student satisfaction, loyalty, and overall institutional growth.

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