



Reconstruction of Marketing Mix Strategy of Educational Services in Creating Superior Customer Value

Suyoko^{1*}, Sulistyorini², Agus Eko Sujianto³

¹⁻³ Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Indonesia

Email: yokosu701102@gmail.com¹, sulistyorini@uinsatu.ac.id², aguseko@uinsatu.ac.id³

*Corresponding Author: yokosu701102@gmail.com

Abstract. The dynamics of globalization and market saturation force Private Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIS) to redefine their marketing strategies to avoid being trapped in partial and secular conventional management. This study aims to analyze and construct a reconstruction of the marketing mix strategy (7P) based on Islamic values in creating superior customer value at the newly established STAI MAS Tulungagung. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies, then analyzed interactively. The results show that STAI MAS successfully deconstructed the 7P elements by integrating the tradition of yellow book literacy (*turats*), the value of justice (*'adl*), environmental assurance (*hifdzul bi'ah*), honest promotion (*shiddiq*), the work culture of *itqan-khidmah*, the digital administration system (*taisir-amanah*), and Islamic aesthetics (*nazhafah*). This reconstruction has proven to create competitive advantages in the form of public trust and student pride. However, the institution still faces obstacles such as limited digital campaign budgets and public stereotypes about private campuses. Based on these findings, it is recommended that STAI MAS management undertake a more innovative digital transformation and structure integrated marketing communications (IMC) to minimize budget constraints, while optimizing strategic partnerships with Islamic boarding school alumni networks to strengthen the institution's brand equity in suburban areas.

Keywords: Islamic Values; Marketing Mix; Private Islamic Religious College (PTKIS); Reconstruction; Superior Customer Value.

1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of globalization and information transparency have transformed the higher education landscape into an increasingly competitive and open arena. Islamic universities are no longer merely institutions producing graduates or safeguarding religious morality, but have transformed into educational service providers demanding accountability, quality, and responsiveness to market expectations. Amid the proliferation of higher education institutions, both public and private, the greatest challenge for Islamic universities today is how to maintain their relevance and competitiveness in the eyes of the public. The phenomenon of market saturation is forcing institutions to move beyond relying solely on conventional, transactional marketing approaches.

Educational institutions or start-ups must be able to adopt socially responsible behavioral practices as a way to build consumer trust and strengthen relationships with other institutions to maintain sustainability (Atua et al., 2026). To survive and win the competition, universities must be able to offer something that fundamentally differentiates them from their competitors, namely through the creation of superior customer value. Therefore, higher education institutions need to implement a more intensive market-based approach. This can be achieved through the implementation of segmented marketing strategies and a comprehensive

analysis of the various elements that determine prospective student preferences (Dogu & Vehbi, 2019).

Superior customer value In the context of higher education, it is the accumulation of holistic benefits felt by students and stakeholders in terms of academics, non-academics, reputation, and emotional aspects that far exceed the costs and sacrifices they incur (Weinstein, 2012). When an institution is able to deliver superior value, it fosters customer loyalty, enhances its reputation, and ultimately drives its sustainability. However, the reality on the ground shows that many Islamic higher education institutions are still trapped in management that merely operates (running business) without a strong differentiation strategy. Many struggle to formulate and communicate their unique value proposition, thus failing to optimally attract potential customers.

The root of this competitive weakness is often caused by the implementation of an outdated and non-contextual marketing mix. The traditional marketing mix, which encompasses product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence (7Ps), has been proven to improve institutional performance and enable rapid and accurate decision-making Kumar et al. (2026), although often implemented in a partial and secular manner. Marketing strategy is often narrowly understood as limited to promotional activities and recruiting new students at the beginning of the academic year. This approach ignores the substance of the marketing mix as a dynamic, integrated strategic management system for building a comprehensive customer experience.

Previous studies confirm that this marketing mix strategy has been proven to be able to increase the number of applicants, strengthen the institution's image, and build competitiveness amidst competition between universities Hallaji et al. (2025). Therefore, a strategic step is needed in the form of a radical reconstruction of the current marketing mix for educational services. This reconstruction is not simply changing promotional tactics, but rather reorganizing all marketing mix instruments to align with the strategic orientation of creating superior customer value. Research by Mustofa et al. (2024) found that the implementation of the marketing mix within Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKI) in Indonesia shows a very dynamic development trend. This is in line with the growth curve of the number of institutions, which has consistently increased by 0.37%. Looking at historical data, in 2016, the number of Islamic higher education institutions was recorded at 699 institutions, and this figure experienced significant expansion to reach 964 institutions by 2024. This acceleration in the quantity of educational units is inseparable from the successful articulation of marketing

mix strategies within each institution's governance, which ultimately stimulates and makes a positive contribution to the advancement of Islamic education nationally.

For Islamic universities, reconstructing the marketing mix has a unique urgency and uniqueness that is not available at public universities. The primary basis of differentiation for Islamic campuses lies in the Islamic values inherent in their identity (Azra, 2013). Unfortunately, this theological and sociological potential is often not structurally integrated into the marketing system. Constructing a marketing mix strategy model for educational services based on Islamic values is a new path to creating an authentic Islamic marketing model. In this model, educational services must be formulated as high-quality services that integrate science and religious knowledge (Isaac, 2025).

In an empirical context, the urgency of reconstructing an Islamic value-based marketing strategy finds its momentum relevant at the KH. Muhammad Ali Shodiq Islamic College (STAI MAS) in Tulungagung. As a newly established Private Islamic Religious College (PTKIS) based on the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 769 of 2022, STAI MAS is faced with a challenging, paradoxical reality. The institution, which serves as the locus of this research, was established in 2022 with an initial capital of three study programs, all of which have received "Good" accreditation status, in line with the institution's accreditation status. Demonstrating accelerated growth, in 2025 the institution successfully obtained approval for the addition of three new study programs. Thus, by the 2025/2026 Academic Year, the institution will have managed a total of six study programs. Currently, the institution is in a strategic phase towards converting its status from a College to an Institute, which is also marked by the momentum of the inaugural graduation ceremony scheduled for September 2026.

On the one hand, as a newly established institution, STAI MAS Tulungagung must compete in the "red ocean" of the higher education industry in the former Kediri Residency area, particularly in the Tulungagung Regency area, which has been dominated by state and private universities that are much more established and have a large mass base. Theoretically, a new university needs years to build brand awareness and public trust. High service quality, a strong reputation, and outcomes that increase employment opportunities significantly increase brand awareness in higher education institutions, of course, require structuring across various lines and significant resource support (Ling et al., 2018).

However, on the other hand, STAI MAS Ngunut has shown significant development anomalies since its inception in 2022. Despite its relatively young age, the institution has managed to attract a competitive number of new students compared to other private

universities. This initial success cannot be separated from the historical and sociological roots of STAI MAS, which was born from the womb of the Hidayatul Mubtadi-ien Islamic Boarding School (PPHM) Ngunut Tulungagung, a large Islamic boarding school institution with a very strong religious influence and alumni network in East Java. Social capital in the form of cultural legitimacy of the Islamic boarding school's independence and the figure of KH. Muhammad Ali Shodiq are the main foundations inherent in the institution's image. These Islamic boarding school values and the authority of traditional Islamic scholarship serve as the main anchors in compiling the marketing mix components of its educational services.

Despite its strong cultural capital, STAI MAS Tulungagung still faces critical long-term managerial challenges. Over-reliance on traditional markets (student and alumni networks) without being balanced by professional modern marketing strategies has the potential to hinder market share expansion. As a new campus, the 7P marketing mix components (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence) at STAI MAS Tulungagung are still in the formative stage and require adaptive standardization. The academic products offered must be able to meet the needs of the modern workplace without reducing the noble values of Islamic boarding schools. Likewise, infrastructure (physical evidence) and digital service systems (process) are still under intensive development to catch up with competing institutions.

Therefore, STAI MAS Tulungagung is an ideal location for this research. Photographing this institution, which was only established in 2022, is expected to provide a fresh perspective on how the process of constructing a marketing mix strategy is initiated from scratch (starting point). The STAI MAS case will clearly demonstrate how Islamic values from Islamic boarding schools are converted into functional strategic marketing instruments, not merely cosmetic branding. The integration of Islamic values into the marketing mix is the primary driver of superior customer value. The characteristics of graduates with character, a religious academic atmosphere, and governance with integrity are added values highly sought after by society amidst the modern moral crisis (Sari, 2024).

This study will analyze how STAI MAS Tulungagung implements the 7P marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence) that is able to leapfrog the dominance of older campuses in the surrounding area. Through the focus on constructing a marketing mix model based on Islamic values, it is hoped that a solid theoretical and practical formula can be found to increase the competitiveness, quality, and attractiveness of Islamic Higher Education in the future.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This investigation applies qualitative methods through a case study design to explore a deep and comprehensive understanding of the actualization of the 7P marketing mix within the framework of Transformative Islamic Education at STAI MAS Tulungagung. The use of a case study design is deemed relevant because it facilitates researchers to dissect complex phenomena holistically and contextually, in line with the multifaceted and dynamic nature of higher education institutions (Yin, 2018). In this research landscape, researchers act as key instruments (human instruments) who conduct direct observations and interact within the campus academic ecosystem. The researcher's presence in the field facilitates the absorption of internal dynamics, organizational culture, and the articulation of real-world marketing strategies, which in turn enhances data validity through active engagement (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection technique

The unit of analysis or data sources in this research rely on key informants, namely the top management (Chairman and Vice Chairperson), the public relations division, the New Student Admissions Committee (PMB), lecturers, and new students, all of whom were selected based on competency and direct involvement in the institution's marketing activities. The data collection instruments are combined through in-depth interviews, participant observation on social media, brochure distribution, and campus infrastructure, and are strengthened by a documentary study in the form of student statistical trends over the past three years. The synergy of these various techniques is oriented to obtain rich, weighty data that is able to represent both formal and informal perspectives.

Data analysis

The data structuring process was executed by adopting the interactive analysis model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which integrates three interconnected processes: data condensation, data codification/presentation, and conclusion formulation or verification. This scheme facilitates a rigorous and systematic data interpretation process to map patterns, themes, and correlations between elements (Saldaña, 2014). To ensure the validity of the scientific findings, this research implemented source triangulation techniques by cross-comparing the arguments of the leadership, the tactical committee, and students, as well as technical triangulation through the integration of interview, observation, and document review methods. This paradigm was applied to ensure that the research conclusions project credibility and accurate empirical originality.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The reconstruction of the marketing mix for educational services at the KH. Muhammad Ali Shodiq Islamic College (STAI MAS) in Tulungagung demonstrates a paradigm shift from a secular-conventional marketing model to an educational marketing model imbued with Islamic values. As a new higher education institution established in 2022, STAI MAS Tulungagung does not fall into the trap of blindly imitating the marketing strategies of established universities around it. Instead, the institution deconstructs and reorients the seven elements of the marketing mix (7Ps) by emphasizing Islamic values and the authenticity of Islamic boarding school traditions as its main pillars. This strategic endeavor aims to formulate a distinctive identity that effectively stimulates the creation of superior customer value, across functional, social, emotional, and epistemic dimensions for educational service users. The research results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Reconstruction of Educational Services Marketing Mix Strategy.

Marketing Mix Components (7P)	Existing Conditions & Conventional Patterns	Reconstruction Based on Islamic Values (Field Findings at STAI MAS)	Superior Customer Value Created (Benefits for Students/Guardians)
Product	The curriculum is only oriented towards fulfilling national standards (KKNI) for formal graduation.	Integration of the national curriculum with the tradition of yellow book literacy (<i>turats</i>) derived from the Hidatul Mubtadi-ien Islamic Boarding School.	Dual-Competence Value: Graduates not only have a formal bachelor's degree, but also authentic Islamic scientific authority.
Price	The determination of tuition fees is commercial-profit oriented towards campus business operations.	Formulation of fair tuition fees ('adl) by providing Islamic boarding school scholarships and cross-subsidies.	Economic Value & Blessings (Barakah Value): Very affordable costs accompanied by spiritual peace of mind for parents regarding their child's educational investment.
Place	The campus location is simply a physical place of learning that is separate from the students' social ecosystem.	The campus is spatially integrated with the Islamic boarding school environment as a moral fortress (<i>hifdzul bi'ah</i>).	Security Values: A religious learning environment, safe from promiscuity, while also being a direct socio-religious laboratory.
Promotion	Aggressive, bombastic, and sometimes manipulative advertising to achieve student quantity targets.	Honesty-based promotion (<i>shiddiq</i>) through educational outreach, alumni network empowerment, road shows, and Islamic boarding school digital media.	Public Trust Value: Consumers feel honorably invited to seek knowledge (da'wah), not exploited as a market commodity.
People (HR)	The lecturer-student relationship is transactional, a teaching formality, and bureaucratic.	Internalization of professional work culture (<i>itqan</i>) which is synergized with the spirit of devotion (<i>khidmah</i>) of staff and lecturers.	Exemplary Values: Students receive courteous service and sincere spiritual moral guidance from educators.

Process	The academic service bureaucracy is rigid, slow, and often makes things difficult for students.	Implementation of a digital administration system that is fast, transparent, accountable (trust), and makes it easy (<i>taisir</i>).	Time & Psychological Efficiency: Students receive assurance of fair service without the hassle of bureaucratic red tape.
Physical Evidence	The physical facilities are as they are due to its status as a new campus, thus reducing self-confidence.	Development of representative infrastructure while maintaining cleanliness (<i>nazhafah</i>), neatness, and traditional Islamic aesthetics.	Pride Value: Cultivating psychological comfort and a sense of pride in students, while simultaneously reducing the stigma of being a minor on a new campus.

Discussion

In terms of academic product and pricing, STAI MAS Tulungagung has successfully constructed a dual value of excellence that integrates the national curriculum with the tradition of yellow book literacy (*turats*) typical of the Hidayatul Muftadi-ien Islamic Boarding School. In an effort to strengthen this institutional identity, curriculum diversification has been carried out by adding Islamic boarding school courses across all study programs. Educational service products are no longer valued solely as legal-formal commodities in the form of diplomas and bachelor's degrees, but are recognized as a process of transmitting Islamic knowledge that has an authentic and accountable sanad. This product's excellence is secured by a pricing policy based on the principles of justice (*'adl*) and Islamic philanthropy, where the formulation of tuition fees is designed with a cross-subsidy approach and strengthening access to scholarships based on community funds. Theoretically, the integration of these two components minimizes students' financial sacrifices while multiplying the substantial benefits they receive. Students' parents do not simply view tuition fees as purely economic expenses, but as a spiritual investment that carries aspects of blessing (*barakah*).

These findings demonstrate that STAI MAS Tulungagung has successfully constructed dual competencies through the strategic integration of the national curriculum and the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) tradition of yellow book literacy (*turats*). This curriculum reconciliation represents a harmonious articulation of formal education with traditional Islamic doctrine to ensure synergy of academic and spiritual excellence. This transformative initiative responds to the contemporary challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools in aligning modern educational standards with the preservation of cultural and religious identity. In practice, this adaptation of the national curriculum is designed to maintain the institution's noble values without sacrificing global demands. Furthermore, the functionalization of yellow books within the academic ecosystem has been empirically proven to stimulate contextual learning, cultural conservation, and the dissemination of moderate Islamic thought (*wasathiyah*). Thus, the formulation of this dual competency not only increases institutional relevance but also

broadens the pedagogical impact of Islamic boarding schools in responding to the dynamics of the times (Wasehudin et al., 2023).

Furthermore, in terms of location and promotional strategy, the campus's geographical proximity and cultural ties to Islamic boarding schools in the Ngunut District of Tulungagung are utilized as instruments of spatial efficiency and guarantee a conducive learning environment (*hifdzul bi'ah*). This environment acts as an integrated socio-religious laboratory that provides a sense of security for stakeholders. Meanwhile, promotional activities are radically reconstructed by prioritizing the values of honesty (*shiddiq*) and educational propagation, avoiding manipulative or bombastic commercial persuasion patterns. The institution implements a proactive promotional pattern based on direct marketing, in which the PMB team conducts direct visits (roadshows) to MA and SMA educational units. Dissemination of campus information is integrated through the Islamic boarding school alumni network, religious study forums, and da'wah-based digital media. This honest marketing communication pattern fosters strong public trust since its inception, as the community positions this institution as an extension of clean and reliable religious authority. In line with the findings Loo et al. (2026) that marketing communications are very important for higher education institutions to utilize in building strong and positive Customer Based Brand Equity and stimulating Electronic Word of Mouth Marketing.

Finally, in the pillars of human resources (people), processes (process), and physical evidence (physical evidence), STAI MAS Tulungagung internalizes a professional work culture (*itqan*) inspired by a spirit of sincere devotion (*khidmah*). These values are a distinctive characteristic and a competitive advantage that distinguishes this institution from other higher education institutions. The relationship between lecturers, staff, and students does not operate rigidly within transactional bureaucratic boundaries, but rather is bound by transformative teacher-student etiquette. This service structure is optimized through the digitalization of academic administration based on the principles of convenience (*taisir*) and trustworthiness. This digital transformation significantly reduces bureaucratic waiting times while ensuring the certainty of equitable service. By integrating theological values and system modernization, operational efficiency can be transparently improved. This process acceleration not only eliminates procedural obstacles but also strengthens institutional accountability in providing responsive, equitable, and accurate public services to customers. The manifestation of the institution's physical evidence is realized through the design of visual infrastructure that reflects Islamic values of cleanliness (*nazhafah*), orderliness, and beauty. In its implementation, the provision of all assets and operational facilities received full financial and

policy support from the PPMH Foundation. The combination of humanistic human resource management, efficient digital processes, and the physical visualization of a religious campus successfully eroded the stigma commonly attached to new universities. The end result is the formation of a sense of pride and a deep emotional bond among students, which positions STAI MAS Tulungagung as a competitive producer of superior customer value amidst the current fierce competition of Islamic higher education institutions.

Based on the above explanation, it can be confirmed that the success of marketing management in Islamic boarding school-based higher education institutions rests on the synergy between strategic progressiveness and maintaining the authenticity of institutional values. The varied promotional activities, whether through direct penetration, alumni networks, or digital ecosystem optimization, demonstrate responsive adaptation to the dynamics of the contemporary education market. This is in line with the findings of Abdelhamid et al. (2025) which confirms that promotion through digital influencers, brand awareness, and word of mouth (WOM) communication simultaneously provide a significant positive contribution to customer purchase intention. Explicitly, digital marketing activities and WOM interactions are proven to be strongly correlated in escalating brand awareness, which in the next phase acts as a positive predictor in stimulating customer decisions. However, the crucial aspect that is the main determinant of Islamic boarding school competitiveness is not simply the intensity of publication, but rather the distinctive characteristics and religious cultural values that are inherent as a unique selling proposition (USP) in the eyes of the community.

To ensure the sustainability of an institution's image and reputation, traditional marketing patterns must be transformed into more structured governance. Traditional marketing methods are no longer adequate in a dynamic environment. Institutions must adopt innovative strategies, such as digital transformation and integrated marketing communications, to build a positive image and reputation. These strategies help institutions adapt to changing stakeholder expectations and competitive pressures (Shen et al., 2025). This is achieved through strategic integration between the marketing mix formulation and Business Model Canvas (BMC) mapping, which is consistently supported by an effective coordinative communication pattern (Hallaji et al., 2025). Ultimately, the entire series of strategies requires a comprehensive evaluation space from the management and leadership of the Islamic boarding school. This control mechanism is important to ensure that every tactical policy taken is not only managerially effective in increasing prospective student retention, but also remains aligned with the quality assurance principles and the noble ideology championed by the Islamic boarding school world.

The implementation of the 7P marketing mix has made a positive contribution, but in practice, it still faces concrete obstacles that reduce the effectiveness of its achievements. Fundamental obstacles arise from the internal sector, particularly limited marketing budget allocation, which has resulted in stalled acceleration of massive and structured promotional campaigns. This phenomenon has created a dilemma for STAI MAS Tulungagung in prioritizing the budget between academic operational needs and marketing expansion. The subsequent impact is that optimization of digital promotional media, such as the use of paid advertising and the production of representative content, is not optimal. This limited financial instrument aligns with the premise of Ryńca & Ziaecian, (2021) which emphasizes that budget problems are the main determinant that intervenes in marketing success in educational institutions.

The context of institutional image barriers such as conceptualization (Dei & Anane-Donkor, 2021). In the global marketing landscape, reputation is a key determinant in influencing prospective applicants' decisions. This also applies to STAI MAS Tulungagung. The collective public perspective on the credibility of private universities continues to manifest complex structural barriers. Although academic program designs and scholarship incentive schemes have been optimally formulated, stereotypes that position private institutions as being in the shadow of state universities continue to dominate prospective student preferences. This situation directly creates pressure to hinder the effectiveness of Product and Promotion elements, given that campus management is required to allocate extra energy to affirm academic quality through empirical indicators, such as achieving superior accreditation, alumni absorption distribution, and scientific research productivity. These psychological-social barriers are even more complex for STAI MAS Tulungagung, given that the institution operates in a suburban area characterized by a community with relatively low interest in and retention of Islamic boarding school traditions.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research objective to analyze and construct a marketing mix strategy model for educational services based on Islamic values at STAI MAS Tulungagung, it can be concluded that this institution has succeeded in formulating an authentic Islamic marketing model to create superior customer value. Through a radical deconstruction of the 7P elements, STAI MAS does not simply adopt conventional marketing, but integrates the tradition of yellow book literacy (*turats*) in the product aspect, the value of justice (*'adl*) in the price, and the guarantee of *hifdzul bi'ah* in the place. In addition, this reconstruction is strengthened by

honest promotion (*shiddiq*), internalization of the work culture of *itqan* and *khidmah* in the people component, accountability of the digital system (*taisir* and *amanah*) in the process, to the visualization of Islamic aesthetics in physical evidence. Despite facing formative challenges in the form of limited digital promotion budgets and obstacles to social psychological stereotypes of suburban communities towards private universities, the construction of a marketing mix based on Islamic boarding school values has proven effective as a unique selling proposition. The synergy between cultural capital and modern governance ultimately succeeded in creating public trust and a sense of student pride, which positioned STAI MAS as a strategic formula in increasing the competitiveness, quality, and attractiveness of Islamic Higher Education in the midst of tight competition.

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