

The Application of Marketing Mix in Increasing Sales at the Integrated Training and Skills Development Center (PLKT) BNKP Gunungsitoli

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the application of the marketing mix in increasing sales at the Integrated Training and Skills Development Center (PLKT) BNKP Gunungsitoli. The marketing mix includes product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that the implementation of the marketing mix has significantly contributed to increased public interest and purchase decisions at PLKT BNKP. Product variation and quality were found to attract customer attention, while competitive pricing strategies enhanced accessibility. Promotional efforts, especially through social media and community involvement, helped build brand awareness. Additionally, the role of skilled human resources, efficient service processes, and the physical environment of the institution also influenced consumer trust and loyalty. The findings suggest that a consistent and well-integrated marketing strategy is essential for sustaining business growth in training and skills development institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of dynamic market competition, organizations are compelled to adopt effective marketing strategies to maintain their relevance and competitiveness. One of the most widely recognized frameworks in marketing strategy is the marketing mix, commonly referred to as the 7Ps: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. This concept serves as a comprehensive guide for businesses to structure and implement marketing decisions aimed at fulfilling customer needs while achieving organizational goals (Boccia & Tohidi, 2024).

The marketing mix has evolved from the traditional 4Ps to 7Ps, particularly in service-based organizations where intangible elements play a pivotal role in customer satisfaction. In the context of service institutions like training and skills development centers, the incorporation of people, process, and physical evidence becomes essential. These three elements help build trust, deliver service quality, and influence consumers' perceptions and decision-making processes (Mostaghel et al., 2023).

Indonesia, as a developing nation, continues to prioritize human resource development through vocational education and skill enhancement initiatives. Institutions like the Integrated Training and Skills Development Center (PLKT) BNKP Gunungsitoli play a vital role in empowering individuals with practical skills, especially in regions like Nias where economic opportunities are

growing but still unevenly distributed. To fulfill its mission effectively, PLKT must also adopt professional marketing strategies to reach and retain its target audience (Shepelenko et al., 2024).

However, despite the institution's dedication to providing quality training, its sales performance—particularly in terms of course enrollments and program uptake has faced challenges. These challenges include limited public awareness, insufficient promotional activities, and low brand recognition. In such a context, a strategic application of the marketing mix can offer a pathway to enhancing visibility, building credibility, and ultimately increasing sales and participation (Papadopoulou et al., 2023).

Previous studies have shown that the implementation of an integrated marketing mix strategy significantly impacts customer behavior and purchasing decisions. For example, product quality and relevance to market needs are critical in attracting trainees. Pricing strategies must reflect the economic capacity of the target segment, especially in semi-urban or rural areas. Moreover, promotional tools such as digital marketing and community engagement have emerged as effective ways to communicate value propositions (Krishnan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, service delivery in training institutions is inseparable from the human element. Trainers and administrative staff must exhibit professionalism, empathy, and responsiveness. These factors, when aligned with streamlined operational processes and conducive physical environments, foster customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, optimizing the 7Ps in a coherent manner becomes a necessity for service-driven institutions (Permana et al., 2023).

Given the above considerations, this research focuses on evaluating the implementation of the marketing mix at PLKT BNKP Gunungsitoli. It aims to identify which elements are being effectively utilized, which ones require improvement, and how their combined execution contributes to sales performance (Halawa et al., 2023). The insights from this study are expected to serve as a practical reference for similar institutions seeking to enhance their market presence and organizational sustainability. Ultimately, the findings from this research will not only contribute to the academic understanding of marketing strategies in educational service contexts but also provide actionable recommendations for practitioners in skill development institutions (Alsharif et al., 2023). By aligning internal strategies with market expectations through the marketing mix framework, PLKT and other training centers can improve their effectiveness in fostering employability and community development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method to explore and analyze the application of the marketing mix strategy in increasing sales at the Integrated Training and Skills Development Center (PLKT) BNKP Gunungsitoli. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of marketing practices within a real-world institutional context. It enables the researcher to capture the complexity of interactions between marketing elements and consumer behavior, especially in a service-based organization (Marc Lim, 2023).

The primary data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted at the PLKT BNKP Gunungsitoli facility to directly witness how marketing elements, such as physical environment, service processes, and personnel interaction, were manifested in daily operations. These observations provided contextual insights into the tangible and intangible aspects of the marketing mix implementation (Farid et al., 2023).

To gain more detailed and personal perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including the training center manager, administrative staff, trainers, and several service users (participants/trainees). These interviews aimed to uncover their experiences, perceptions, and evaluations regarding product offerings, pricing strategies, promotional efforts, and overall service delivery (Papadopoulou et al., 2023). The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling the interviewer to explore emerging themes while maintaining consistency across interviews. In addition to field data, documentation was used to support the findings. This included institutional records, promotional materials, participant registration data, and internal reports related to program development and marketing activities (Mostaghel et al., 2023). These documents served as secondary data to validate and triangulate the results obtained from observations and interviews (Halawa et al., 2024).

The collected data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis, in which the researcher identified recurring themes, categorized relevant information, and interpreted the meaning behind patterns and relationships among marketing mix elements. The analysis process involved reducing the data into manageable segments, coding them into categories related to the 7Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence), and drawing conclusions based on the identified patterns (Krishnan et al., 2023).

Throughout the research process, researcher objectivity and credibility were maintained by following ethical guidelines and ensuring transparency in data collection and interpretation. Participants' anonymity was protected, and consent was obtained prior to interviews. Triangulation among data sources and techniques was also employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the study (Tiganis et al., 2023). Overall, this methodology was chosen to provide a holistic view of how PLKT BNKP Gunungsitoli applies marketing strategies in its operations and how these strategies influence customer engagement and sales performance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the marketing mix at the Integrated Training and Skills Development Center (PLKT) BNKP Gunungsitoli has contributed positively to the institution's efforts to increase its sales performance, particularly in terms of training program enrollments. Each element of the 7Ps marketing mix demonstrates a different level of influence and effectiveness in shaping consumer interest and purchase decisions (Papadopoulou et al., 2023).

In terms of product, PLKT offers a variety of training programs that are tailored to local market needs, such as sewing, culinary, and basic computer skills. These programs are designed to enhance employability and entrepreneurship among participants. Respondents acknowledged the relevance and practical value of the training content, which in turn has improved the institution's reputation and increased community interest in joining the programs (Tiganis et al., 2023). However, some informants noted the need for regular updates to the curriculum to keep up with technological changes and job market demands.

The pricing strategy employed by PLKT is considered affordable and competitive, especially for low-to-middle-income communities in Gunungsitoli and its surrounding areas. The center often offers flexible payment options and discounts for early registration or group enrollments (Permana et al., 2023). This strategy has made the training accessible to a wider audience and has encouraged participation among individuals who otherwise might not have been able to afford similar services elsewhere. It reflects an understanding of the economic conditions of the target market.

The place element, referring to the location and accessibility of the training center, is also a significant factor. PLKT is strategically located in an area that is easily reachable by public transportation, which enhances its visibility and convenience. The physical facilities, including classrooms, workshops, and supporting equipment, are functional, although not yet optimal in terms of modern standards (Halawa et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the center's accessibility supports its mission of reaching marginalized groups.

Promotion remains one of the most influential elements in the marketing mix implementation. The study found that PLKT utilizes both traditional and digital promotional methods. Word-of-mouth remains a strong promotional tool, especially in the local community (Halawa et al., 2024). Additionally, social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp are used to disseminate information about upcoming training schedules, success stories, and promotional offers (Boccia & Tohidi, 2024). However, some respondents suggested that the institution could further enhance its visibility by expanding into newer digital channels and collaborating with local government or NGOs for outreach.

The people aspect, which focuses on human resources, is a key strength of PLKT. Trainers are generally experienced and skilled in their respective fields, and administrative staff are perceived as friendly and responsive. Positive interpersonal interactions were frequently mentioned by trainees as a reason for their satisfaction and continued loyalty (Shrestha et al., 2023). The professionalism and dedication of the staff directly affect service quality and customer trust.

In the process dimension, the institution maintains clear and efficient operational procedures, from registration to training delivery. However, some participants pointed out that certain

administrative steps, such as certificate issuance and follow-up support, could be improved. Streamlining these processes would enhance overall customer experience and satisfaction. Lastly, physical evidence, including infrastructure, cleanliness, branding, and learning materials, plays a supporting role in creating a trustworthy and professional environment. Although the facilities are relatively basic, they are maintained well (Alsharif et al., 2023). Visual branding elements such as banners, uniforms, and signage contribute to institutional identity and public recognition. Continuous improvement in this area could strengthen the perceived value of the services offered.

In conclusion, the application of the 7Ps marketing mix at PLKT BNKP Gunungsitoli has been moderately effective in increasing sales and service engagement. Product relevance, affordable pricing, effective promotion, and human-centered service delivery emerged as the strongest contributors (Lieophairot & Rojniruttikul, 2023). Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement, particularly in process optimization, promotional innovation, and facility enhancement. The integration and continuous refinement of these marketing elements are essential for the sustainability and growth of training institutions, particularly those serving rural and semi-urban communities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the marketing mix strategy has had a significant impact on improving the sales performance of the Integrated Training and Skills Development Center (PLKT) BNKP Gunungsitoli. The integration of the 7Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence has enabled the institution to respond more effectively to the needs and expectations of its target market. The findings indicate that product relevance and diversity, supported by affordable and flexible pricing, have increased the attractiveness of the training programs. Strategic promotional activities, especially through social media and word-of-mouth communication, have enhanced public awareness and contributed to higher enrollment rates (Boccia & Tohidi, 2024). Moreover, the professionalism and friendliness of staff members, coupled with efficient operational processes and an adequate physical environment, have reinforced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Despite these achievements, the study also identifies areas for improvement. These include modernizing training facilities, expanding promotional channels, updating curriculum content, and enhancing administrative efficiency. Addressing these areas will strengthen the institution's competitiveness and ability to reach a broader audience. In summary, a well-coordinated and consistently evaluated marketing mix strategy is crucial for the sustainability and growth of vocational training institutions. The experience of PLKT BNKP Gunungsitoli serves as a valuable reference for similar organizations seeking to increase their market reach, service quality, and long-term impact on community development.

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