



Developing marketing strategies for Universitas Terbuka in South Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

This research was qualitative research with a qualitative descriptive approach. It was conducted at Universitas Terbuka in South Sulawesi, with 224 samples spread across the Luwu Regency, Bone Regency, Gowa Regency, and Makassar City—data collection through questionnaires and interviews. The collected quantitative data was then processed using descriptive analysis, while the qualitative data was processed using data reduction, data display, conclusions, or verification. The results of the research conclude that: 1) The market segmentation of prospective UT students is dominated by prospective students aged 21-50, more dominated by women, most of them work in the informal sector, earn less than 5 million rupiah, and the distribution of applicants is generally in all regions level two in South Sulawesi Province; 2) The primary considerations in making a decision or making the choice to enroll at UT are the cheap tuition fees and the distance education model which allows students to study from home, study from the village, and study without having to leave their jobs, or they can work while studying; 3) The marketing strategy that must be developed includes: the marketing mix consists of 7Ps including product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence; and 4) The special characteristics that become UT's brand image include that the public considers that studying at UT is flexible: Open in the sense that UT accepts prospective new students openly without considering their biological age, diploma age, and unlimited study period and particular time. Long distance means that lectures can be carried out remotely, anytime, and anywhere, independent lectures with guidance from lecturers. Another brand image of UT is that UT can convince, serve, and meet stakeholders' satisfaction levels. Besides that, UT graduates have spread across various regions in Indonesia and abroad and have occupied strategic positions.

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INTRODUCTION

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is Indonesia's 45th State University, implementing an open and distance learning system. This learning system has proven effective in increasing the reach and equal distribution of quality higher education opportunities for all Indonesian citizens, including those living in remote areas throughout the archipelago and in various countries abroad. The rapid development of science and technology requires UT to continue to increase the potential of human resources (HR) that support productivity. However, limited space and time are the main obstacles for many people in developing themselves and improving their careers. Since its inauguration in 1984, UT has received a mandate from the government to provide extensive opportunities for all Indonesian citizens, both those who have just graduated from high school and those who are already working, to pursue higher education regardless of their social, economic background, age and place of residence. The UT learning system allows flexible learning for those who wish to participate in the higher education system using a distance method ("Universitas Terbuka," 2023).

Universitas Terbuka (UT) manages four faculties and one postgraduate program with 44 study programs: Masters Program, Doctoral Program, Undergraduate Program, Diploma Program (D2, D3 and D4), and professions. These programs are all managed using a distance education system (SPJJ). UT is the only educational institution that provides education using an open system and single-mode distance. UT has researched implementing distance higher education as an institution providing distance education. UT uses the results of this research as material for UT development. The results of this research can also be used by the wider community who want to know more deeply about the open and distance higher education system, specifically the implementation of UT.

The presence of Universitas Terbuka with a distance learning system can answer the problem of equal distribution of national education, which can be reached by people living in remote villages (Husain, 2020). In principle, UT provides opportunities for every person who wants to pursue higher education because the establishment of UT aims to provide the broadest possible opportunities for Indonesian citizens and foreign citizens wherever they live to obtain higher education, provide higher education services for those who work or for other reasons that cannot continue studying by face-to-face at universities; and developing academic and professional education programs that are adapted to real development needs, which are often produced by other universities ("Universitas Terbuka," 2023).

UT has faced challenges for nearly 40 years, including increasingly fierce competition in higher education. The increasingly tight competitive conditions mean universities must be prepared to continue encouraging themselves to adapt and innovate to environmental changes to survive and develop educational services (Nasution & Rapon, 2018). Facing the VUCA era, the world of education is facing a learning system dilemma. From traditional to digital, higher education should not only focus on managing the potential of lecturers in teaching and learning but also on building student character so that they are intelligent, knowledgeable, superior, responsible, ethical, and more resilient in facing the era of disruption (Hendrarso, 2020).

Another challenge faced by UT is related to competition with other universities regarding student recruitment. With the government policy providing access and permission to all universities to complete online and distance learning, UT will be the only university that can hold distance learning in the next month. The policy of state universities is to open registration through some admission pathways such as achievement-based independent selection, UTBK-SNBT score-based independent selection, computer-based entrance test (TMBK) independent selection, partnership-based independent selection, and other pathways. As well as the opening of new universities in every city. This is a challenge for UT, which impacts the decrease in interest and registration at UT, specifically in South Sulawesi. Data shows that primary and non-primary

education students experienced a continuous decrease from 2021, as many as 18753 to 3094 in 2022, or a decrease of 89.22 percent.

Based on this phenomenon, a solution must be provided to avoid decreasing new student admissions. One of the efforts that must be made to increase the number of new students is implementing a marketing mix. Marketing Mix is a set of marketing tools a company integrates to produce the desired response from the target market (Pardiyono, 2020).

Alma emphasized that educational institutions' marketing mix elements consist of 4Ps plus the fifth P: P1 = Product, P2 = Price, P3 = Promotion, P4 = Place, and P5 = Personal Traits. According to Boom and Bitner, the services marketing mix comprises 4Ps plus 3Ps. The elements that can be controlled and coordinated for communication purposes to satisfy service consumers are P1 = Product, P2 = Price, P3 = Promotion, P4 = Place, P5 = People (people), P6 = Process, P7 = Physical Evidence (physical evidence) (Marnisah dkk., 2017); (Gajić dkk., 2017); (John dkk., 2023) (Emond dkk., 2021); (Kalenskaya dkk., 2013); (Hashim & Hamzah, 2014); (Kusumawati dkk., 2014); (Othman dkk., 2020).

Several previous studies have found the benefits of the marketing mix, including (Radiman dkk., 2019) finding that the marketing mix, service quality, and university image variables positively and significantly affect student loyalty. Seven marketing strategies can improve higher education performance: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical environment components (Asiah dkk., 2022). Relevant findings show that promotion strongly and directly influences the likelihood that a student will choose a university (Trinh & Nguyen, 2019); (Ahmad et al., 2023); (Siripipatthanakul & Chana, 2021); (Anjani dkk., 2018); (Ravangard dkk., 2020); (Ryńca & Ziaeeian, 2021); (Chana dkk., 2021).

The results of other research (Arpah, 2021) showed that the marketing strategy implemented through a marketing mix with marketing activities in the fields of advertising, personal selling, and public relations has an impact on increasing the number of new students. The marketing mix significantly influences a student's decision to choose a university, Semaun, S. (2019); 61.10% of the decision to choose a university is influenced by product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence (Ginting & Ginting, 2019). The service marketing mix and image of higher education were also found to have a significant positive effect on student satisfaction, partially and simultaneously (Barden, 2020); (Napitupulu et al., 2023); (Ho dkk., 2022); (Altay dkk., 2022); (Novela & Hansopaheluwakan, 2018); (Tanjung, 2021); (Do & Vu, 2020).

Various previous studies have examined the marketing mix but are still limited to developing a marketing mix that includes the 7Ps: product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence. Therefore, the main objective of this research was to analyze and describe which potential market segments are interested in UT, what are the main assessments and reasons why students choose UT, what marketing mix needs to be formulated to promote UT, and what is the brand image for students that makes UT as their choice.

Theoretical implementation in this research is the discovery of new marketing development strategies, especially in higher education marketing, by considering the local community's cultural aspects and local wisdom. Meanwhile, the practical implications of this research can contribute to increasing the number of students at Universitas Terbuka by implementing the 7P marketing mix: product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research with a qualitative descriptive approach. This research was carried out at the Universitas Terbuka with a population of UT students in South Sulawesi, a sample of 224 people spread across four regencies: Luwu Regency, Bone Regency, Gowa Regency,

and Makassar City. Data were collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews with representative respondents as key informants. The collected quantitative data was then processed using descriptive analysis, while the qualitative data was processed using data reduction, data display, conclusions, or verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of research on 224 respondents, it was found that respondents had characteristics ranging from gender, age, income, and occupation, as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	43	19,20
	Female	181	80,80
Age	21-30	86	38,39
	31-40	97	43,30
	>40	41	18,30
Income	<5 % Million	190	84,82
	5 - 10 million	19	8,48
	> 10 million	15	6,70
Occupation	Employee	9	4,02
	Civil Servan	36	16,07
	Enterpreneruship	34	15,18
	Other	145	64,73
Total		224	100

Data from Table 1 showed that from the 224 respondents, respondents were spread across the age range from less than 21 to more than 50 years. Data shows that their concentration is aged 21 - 40 or around 81.96%, while the majority are aged 41 to 50. The concentration of UT students is not at high school graduates or equivalent or around 18 years old but at older ages or the average working age, even up to 50 years. This means that most UT students have worked in specific sectors and are over 50 years old.

Based on the results, the UT market segmentation was mapped into four categories: (1) registrants are dominated by prospective students aged 21-50 years; (2) generally, registrants are female; (3) workers in the informal sector dominate the profession, and (4) has an income of less than 5 million rupiah, and the distribution of applicants is generally in all second level regions in South Sulawesi Province.

These four segments dominate enrollment at Universitas Terbuka (UT). However, the composition of this situation has begun to change, especially concerning the age factor. If, in the past period, the majority of registrants were older, in 2022, it will shift to younger ages. However, if we look at it based on gender, it is still dominated by women from family backgrounds who work in the informal sector and have low incomes.

This shows that the tendency to enroll at UT is favored by those who work in the household area, such as housewives, considering that the convenience provided by UT with distance learning (PJJ) allows them to continue studying even if they do it at home and are not burdened with the task of leaving home for a long time. This trend is important, so that UT marketing is concerned with efforts to increase the number of students. The results of focused discussions with students in the field acknowledged that most students are honorary workers in various fields, such as honorary teachers, village government employees, employees in private businesses for those living in urban areas, and others.

Furthermore, the main reason for customers to become UT students is that the main consideration in choosing UT is the cost factor. They consider the tuition fees at UT cheap, although some still consider them expensive but affordable. In reality, the tuition fee is IDR 1,300.

000 charged by UT is the lowest tuition fee compared to tuition fees at other universities, both state universities and private universities. However, due to the low and uncertain income of the lower strata of society, they perceive that even this amount of tuition is still considered expensive and expect the payment to be paid in installments.

Another factor that students consider when choosing UT is the distance education model, which allows students to study from home, study from the village, and study without leaving their jobs, or they can freely work while studying. By providing education remotely through online media, students can have more freedom to carry out other activities such as working, running a business, becoming employees, and studying without leaving their work and business. Based on the results of interviews with students, it was found that even though distance learning was carried out at UT, students thought that after becoming UT students, they recognized that communication with all components that played a role in learning at UT was going well and thought that UT should always provide messages about UT to audiences or communities in remote areas, especially those that are not reached by other universities. They hope that UT will collaborate with various parties, especially government and private agencies, especially in areas up to sub-districts and villages.

Regarding promotion, the media that contribute the most to introducing UT are friends, family, and leaders where they study. Furthermore, only 14 percent said they knew UT from TV or other social media. Based on the results of interviews so far, the general public's understanding of UT is still very limited. Some members of the public have never even heard of UT. When asked what universities in South Sulawesi are known for, they generally answer UNHAS, UNM, and UMI. Hence, most officials in regions down to sub-districts and villages or job sectors in their areas are generally filled by alumni of the universities mentioned. Even though there are UT alums who have played roles in various fields of work or become officials, they are less well known because UT initiates no activities to establish direct relationships with alums and the community.

Furthermore, formulating the right marketing mix starts with a SWOT analysis to develop the strategy that UT needs for marketing. The following marketing strategy is formulated based on the SWOT analysis results, which include strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 2. Marketing strategy

No	Indicator	Dimensions	Strategy
1	Product	Study Program	Seeking to open study programs according to community needs. Including study programs in information technology, artificial intelligence, health (medicine), and study programs relevant to future workforce needs.
		Curriculum	Achieving a graduate profile in accordance with what is stipulated in the curriculum, UT must provide support such as textbooks and modules that can be accessed more flexibly by students, not only from the UT library, but it is necessary to develop Android-based learning support through the Play Store. To make it easier for students to access learning support services.
		HE Reputation	Striving to improve the quality of higher education through superior accreditation at the study program and university levels and international accreditation from various accreditation institutions. As well as increasing national and international cooperation with various government and private institutions.
2	Price	Education Cost	Maintaining relatively cheap education costs (Setting education costs so that the education costs of other universities always cover them)
		Payment System	1. Continuing to maintain the UKT (Single Tuition Fee) payment system 2. Implementing an accessible payment system that is easier for students. For example (Payments can be paid monthly) or in 2 installments in one semester.
			3. Providing scholarships of 1% of the total new students each year.
3	Promotion	Advertisement	Promotion can be carried out through TV media advertisements in South Sulawesi (TVRI, Fajar, Selebes, Fajar, Kompas, and local District TV

No	Indicator	Dimensions	Strategy
			Media); Print Media at the Provincial Level in South Sulawesi and Local Print Media in each region; Radio; and use of internal social media such as FB; Twitter, TikTok, etc.)
		Public Relation	Promotions are carried out in conjunction with UT's anniversary every year by involving the general public, building intense communication with various community groups, and involving UT in various events at both provincial and district levels, such as anniversary celebrations for each district/city, anniversary activities for various professional organizations such as teachers, advocates, the health sector, etc.
		Education Exhibition	Carrying out educational exhibitions both independently held by UT, as well as educational exhibitions held by other parties such as LLDIKTI and others.
		Direct Marketing	Developing direct marketing such as SMS Broadcast, WhatsApp Broadcast, and others through collaborating to provide networks such as Telkomsel, XL, and other network providers.
		Sales Promotion	Actively carry out promotions by directly visiting high school/high school equivalents, government agencies, and the private sector for UT promotion purposes; Intensifying mobile car services in various areas of South Sulawesi; and expo activities introducing UT as well as opening registration for new student admissions.
		Influencer Services	Using influencer services to promote UT by utilizing public figures in the region
4	Location	Location, Environment, and Transportation	To meet the needs of community services, services must be built and developed in each district and city that are easily accessible and accessible to the community through SALUT, working groups for every district in South Sulawesi, and optimizing online media services to meet the various needs of stakeholders.
5	People (HR)	Education Personnel	Continue to improve administrative competence that is professional friendly, build accessible communication, and provide solutions to student complaints.
		Educators (Lecturers)	Continue to improve the competence of professional lecturers, scientific relevance, highest level of education, friendliness, accessible communication, and ability to resolve student complaints. As well as providing facilities for teaching staff to increase their scientific competency capacity and the highest level of education
6	Service Process	Service Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the quality of the enjoyable learning process. Increasing student satisfaction in the learning process. Innovation in improving online service systems that are faster, more precise, and more accurate. The service ratio by staff to students meets service standards of 1 60 every day. Establishing service operational standards based on service time duration.
		Admission Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making it easier for prospective students in the registration process. Implementating of registration with a system of visiting prospective students (pick them up and grab the ball). Mobile car facilities are optimized in terms of quality and quantity.
7	Physical Environment	Facilities and infrastructures	Improving the quality of learning facilities and learning and exam services

Several special characteristics become UT's brand image, including the fact that the public considers studying at UT flexible: Open and long distance. Open in the sense that UT accepts prospective new students openly without considering their biological age, diploma age, and study period, which is not limited by a particular time. Long distance means that lectures can be carried out remotely, anytime, and anywhere, independent lectures with guidance from lecturers. UT's brand image can convince, serve, and meet stakeholder satisfaction levels. UT graduates have spread across various regions in Indonesia and abroad and have occupied strategic positions. UT Alumni UT students are spread across 55 countries with 3,391 people.

However, this research has limitations as it only took 4 regencies as sample research locations from 24 regencies in South Sulawesi. Therefore, it is hoped that further research will be carried out involving all regencies in South Sulawesi and designing a marketing development strategy that integrates information technology.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it concluded that: 1) The market segmentation of prospective UT students is dominated by prospective students aged 21-50 years, more dominated by women, most of them work in the informal sector, have a family background with an income of less than 5 million rupiah, and the distribution of registrants is generally in all second-level regions in South Sulawesi Province; 2) The primary consideration in making a decision or making the choice to enroll at UT is the cost factor. Students consider the tuition fees cheap, and they also assume that studying at UT means they are no longer burdened with living costs and operational costs such as renting a house/boarding house because they study without leaving their village. Another factor that students consider when choosing UT is the distance education model, which allows students to study from home, study from the village, and study without leaving their jobs, or they can freely work while studying. By providing education remotely via online media, students can have more freedom to carry out other activities such as working, running a business, and becoming employees. They can study without leaving their jobs and businesses. 3) The marketing strategy that must be developed at UT includes: the services marketing mix consists of 7Ps, including P1 = Product, P2 = Price, P3 = Promotion, P4 = Place, P5 = People (people), P6 = Process, P7 = Physical Evidence (physical evidence); and 4) The special characteristics that become UT's brand image include that the public considers that studying at UT is flexible: Open and long distance. Open in the sense that UT accepts prospective new students openly without considering their biological age, diploma age, and study period, which is not limited by a particular time. Long distance means that lectures can be carried out remotely, anytime, and anywhere, independent lectures with guidance from lecturers. Another brand image of UT is that UT can convince, serve, and meet stakeholders' satisfaction levels. Besides that, UT graduates have spread across various regions in Indonesia and abroad and have occupied strategic positions.

Thus, this research contributes to the discovery of a marketing development strategy for universities through the 7P marketing mix: product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence. From the 7P marketing mix, dimensions that are relevant to community culture have been found, including study program, curriculum, the reputation, education cost, payment system, advertisement, public relations, education exhibition, direct marketing, sales promotion, influencer services, location, environment, and transportation, education personnel, educators (lecturers), service quality, admission services, and facilities and infrastructures.

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