
Education marketing mix for private vocational high schools in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Private vocational high schools (VHS) in Indonesia play a pivotal role in the education system, yet they encounter distinctive marketing hurdles that have not received adequate scrutiny. This research endeavors to create customized marketing strategies tailored to the needs of private VHS institutions in Indonesia, aiming to offer valuable insights for educational marketing research and bolster their competitiveness in the educational service arena. Employing grounded theory methods and an inductive approach with an exploratory design, this study taps into existing data to tackle marketing challenges specific to private VHS establishments. It involves key stakeholders from the private VHS sector to glean insights, and expert judgment is utilized for validation purposes. A pilot test, involving 37 students, evaluates the validity and reliability of the devised instrument. The study identifies and retains a total of 60 components across seven marketing mix elements. Further validation, through rigorous tools such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), is deemed necessary to ensure the accuracy and applicability of these elements. By introducing tailored marketing mix elements for private VHS institutions in Indonesia, this study fills a gap in educational marketing research, offering a customized approach. These elements have the potential to revolutionize strategies, amplify market influence, and furnish invaluable insights for well-informed decision-making, thereby fostering sustainable growth in the dynamic educational landscape. However, limitations of this study lie in its focus on private VHS institutions implementing the Ministry of Education's center of excellence program. This specificity may restrict the generalizability of the formulated elements, necessitating further investigation for adaptation to diverse private VHS context

Keywords: Education Institution, Education Marketing, Education Service, Marketing Mix, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK), Vocational High School

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational high schools (VHS) hold a significant role in Indonesia's educational framework, as they are instrumental in equipping graduates with specialized skills tailored for the workforce. These schools focus on practical skill development through hands-on learning and industry internships, aiming to cultivate competencies that meet the demands of the job market. By fostering collaboration with industry experts, VHS provide students with real-world knowledge and skills in various technical and vocational fields such as technology, agriculture, health, tourism, and arts, thus enhancing their employability upon graduation.

In Indonesia, VHS can be broadly categorized into two groups: private (swasta) and public (negeri) institutions. While private VHS outnumber public ones significantly, totaling 10,710 compared to 3,745 nationwide (Kementerian Pendidikan, 2023), the sustainability of private VHS largely hinges on their effectiveness in marketing their educational services. Historically, marketing efforts in the private VHS sector have relied on conventional promotional methods, often lacking a comprehensive understanding of market dynamics.

In today's fiercely competitive educational landscape, marketing strategies must evolve beyond traditional approaches to encompass assessment techniques that delve deeply into user preferences and needs, thereby enhancing institutions' effectiveness and competitiveness. By leveraging such assessment methods, private VHS can tailor their offerings to meet the expectations of students, parents, and the broader community, thereby strengthening their foothold in the education market. At the core of education marketing lies the delivery of value-added services, encompassing communication, brand positioning, and user experience (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Critical factors such as reputation, facilities, and teaching quality are paramount for gaining a competitive edge (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Private VHS institutions must customize their marketing strategies to provide high-quality educational services aligned with market demands, while also prioritizing profitability and customer satisfaction.

In the realm of education, the marketing mix holds significant sway over success. Crafting effective strategies hinges on five crucial factors: evaluating existing programs and markets, exploring new opportunities, scrutinizing competitors, assessing the institution's standing, and pinpointing a target market along with an appropriate marketing mix (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Originally conceived for manufacturing, the marketing mix expanded into the service sector with the addition of people, process, and physical evidence, forming the 7Ps framework. Kotler & Fox (1995) delve into its application in educational settings, stressing the need for a tailored marketing mix to foster sustained growth and positive perception.

While much research on the marketing mix in education has centered on higher education institutions, both domestically in Indonesia (Dally et al., 2021; Pradipta, 2022) and internationally (Alimawi, 2021; Mishra et al., 2021) vocational high schools (VHS) remain largely unexplored. In Indonesia, scant attention has been paid to the marketing mix within the lower education sector, focusing mainly on junior high schools in Islamic boarding schools (Ibadiyah et al., 2022) and early childhood education institutions (Asiah et al., 2022). However, VHS institutions possess unique attributes setting them apart, necessitating thorough investigation, particularly regarding the 7Ps marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) specific to VHS. Regrettably, empirical studies addressing these facets in private VHS institutions in Indonesia are scarce, underscoring the imperative for further research to optimize marketing strategies tailored to their distinctive landscape.

The principal objective of this study is to develop a precise formulation of the marketing mix elements tailored for private vocational high school institutions in Indonesia. This aim is to provide valuable insights into the unique needs and characteristics of these institutions, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness and success in a rapidly evolving education service landscape. Furthermore, this study is conducted with the approach of providing substantial input for a range of analytical tools in the field of education marketing.

METHOD

This study adopted grounded theory methods, utilizing an inductive approach with an exploratory design, grounding itself in empirical inquiries related to marketing within the education service sector, particularly focusing on private VHS institutions. These empirical insights are then analyzed through the lens of relevant theoretical frameworks (Saunders et al., 2019) to systematically identify core issues. This process facilitates the formulation of specific hypotheses and conceptual frameworks (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018), setting the stage for further scholarly investigations. The anticipated outcomes of this study are expected to establish a foundational basis for further investigation in education marketing, specifically in the fields of private VHS institutions.

To achieve this, the study employed an iterative method that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including desk study and structured observation during the initial phase. The desk study involved an extensive review of literature and documents to establish a theoretical foundation. Subsequently, structured observation was employed to scrutinize real-time practices in private VHSs' education services, revealing nuanced details. This method offered tangible insights complementing the theoretical foundations from the desk study.

Discussion and Expert Judgement

In this study, extensive discussions were conducted through collaborative two-way dialogue involving the researcher and key stakeholders in the private VHS education sector. These stakeholders comprised a diverse group, including education institution development consultants, expert staff from Indonesia's Ministry of Education, academics, as well as private VHS foundation administrators, principals, and production unit heads. A preliminary framework was proposed to these key stakeholders and served as a focal point for in-depth discussions. These dialogues were instrumental in gaining deeper insights into the context of private vocational high schools and significantly contributed to the refinement of the marketing mix elements.

Subsequently, expert judgment, a validating method in qualitative research, was employed to further validate the formulated elements. This iterative process aimed to gather both objective and subjective insights from experts (Benoit & Wiesehomeier, 2009) within the specific domains of vocational high school development and marketing management. Expert judgment plays a pivotal

role in bridging the gap between rational consensus and theoretical boundaries (Cooke, 1991), ultimately enhancing the validity of the formulated instrument, as it holds equal validity to empirical data (Drescher et al., 2013). Unlike discussions, expert judgment is conducted in a more passive manner, serving as an external review of the formulated elements.

To ensure a comprehensive assessment, five experts actively engaged in evaluating the relevance of each statement item within the context of vocational high schools and the marketing mix concept. This panel of experts included three experts in vocational high school development, with one possessing expertise in psychometrics, and two specialists in marketing management. Leveraging the diverse expertise of these experts contributed to the robustness of the consensus-building process (Benoit & Wiesehomeier, 2009).

Pilot Testing

The formulated elements were subsequently transformed into an instrument employing a Likert scale. To assess the validity and reliability of this instrument, pilot testing was carried out with the participation of 37 students enrolled in a private VHS majoring in aircraft engineering, located in Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. The pilot respondents included 43.24 percent females and 56.76 percent males, with 18.92 percent from grade X, 43.24 percent from grade XI, and 37.84 percent from grade XII.

To evaluate the instrument's validity, Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was computed. This analysis aimed to gauge the extent to which the instrument's items accurately reflected the measured factors (Hasan, 2003; Zikmund et al., 2013). The correlation coefficients were categorized as significant at the 0.01 level, significant at the 0.05 level, or not significant. Items deemed not significant were considered invalid.

For assessing the instrument's reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was employed to measure internal item consistency (Cronbach, 1951). This coefficient yields a value between zero and one, with higher values indicating greater reliability. The interpretation of Cronbach's Alpha can be categorized as follows: $\alpha \geq 0.90$ as excellent, $\alpha \geq 0.80$ as good, $\alpha \geq 0.70$ as acceptable, $\alpha \geq 0.60$ as questionable, $\alpha \geq 0.50$ as poor, and $\alpha < 0.50$ as unacceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formulating Marketing Mix Elements

Marketing mix elements specific to private vocational high schools are derived from a thorough examination of marketing mix elements in the education service sector. Drawing upon the foundational framework of higher education marketing mix, known for its comprehensive and adaptable nature, this framework is customized for the VHS context with additional insights from scholarly references. Expert consultations and discussions with vocational high school development experts, administrators, and leaders further inform the formulation process.

1. Product Element

Consumer expectations on product attributes, beyond the primary one, play a pivotal role in the service sector, especially given the unique characteristic of its non-ownership transfer (Dally et al., 2021). (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018) have outlined a comprehensive categorization of product attributes, beside the core product which serves the primary function, encompassing expected product, augmented product, and potential product. Education service providers must meticulously consider these four layers when assigning their product marketing strategies.

Formulating product elements within the education service sector is essential for its effective marketing. This element wields significant influence over education service providers as they need to shape the identity and positioning of their services, subsequently impacting consumers' perceptions and responses. Hence, a comprehensive grasp of this element is indispensable. The product element of higher education service is underlined as its study programs, consisting of undergraduate, post-graduate, and doctoral programs. Whilst this element has delineated, including curriculum, competent teachers, spiritual values, outstanding students, safety environment, study programs, as well as moral and social values.

In the case of private VHS institutions, the product element is formulated to encompass key components such as vocational majors, precise curriculum, competent teaching staff, extracurricular activities, supporting competencies cultivation, flagship products development, religious values incorporation, character development promotion, outstanding and character-oriented graduates cultivation, and career development opportunities aligned with industries. The first five components are primary products offered. Institutions also aim to instill specific values in students, including religious and character development, often with industrial nuance. Additionally, they design their education process to generate flagship products, serving as a competitive advantage. Alumni and their career development trajectories also play an integral role in showcasing education outcomes.

2. Price Element

The price element assumes a central role in conveying the quality of education services provided, as noted by Lupiyoadi, (2014). Determining the price in education services, commonly known as tuition fees, should align closely with the missions, objectives, and priorities of its institutions (Kotler & Fox, 1995). To attract prospective students, education institutions must proactively assess their service costs, analyze competitor pricing, identify pertinent factors, and set proper pricing strategies. Furthermore, the positioning of education institutions, targeted prospective students, and the competitive landscape amongst established institutions represent crucial considerations in determining education services' pricing strategy (Dally et al., 2021).

Education institutions are underscored as important in setting appropriate tuition fees for specific target markets, aligning them with the perceived value offered to the service users in terms of education quality, value, physical amenities, while taking into account the provision of tuition fee reduction for students in need. In a related vein, four essential policies are provided to be considered in formulating tuition fees: (1) tiered tuition fee structures; (2) tuition fee reduction schemes, scholarship programs; and (3) accommodation options. Scholarship and part-time employment opportunities, as well as access to financial support, are potential financial assistance avenues for education service users (Mishra et al., 2021).

For private VHS institutions, the formulation of the price element involved aligning tuition with the target market, education quality, character development values, and facilities, as well as the availability of scholarships or tuition fee reductions for less privileged students. Tuition fees set by private VHS institutions are effective in education service marketing when tailored to the appropriate target market, specifically prospective students with certain financial backgrounds. An interpretation from renowned vocational education principles introduced by Charles A. Prosser (Djojonegoro, 1998) emphasizes that tuition fees for VHS institutions should align with the cost structure of the courses while also meeting the financial capabilities and willingness of the users, in this context, students. Additionally, these fees demonstrate effectiveness when complemented by the quality of education, character development values, and excellent facilities. Scholarships or fee reductions are crucial within this element, as they provide access to potentially capable students facing financial constraints. These students are believed to excel in other marketing mix elements, notably the people element.

3. Place Element

The place element emerges as a crucial determinant in the prominence of education institutions. The place element signifies the geographical location where an education service is situated. In a more comprehensive framework, Dally et al., (2021) put forth three distinct modes of interaction exerting influence over the determination of the place element within education services: (1) interactions involving the physical presence of service users at the education facility; (2) interactions characterized by education service providers extending their reach to service users through various means; and (3) interactions in which education service providers and users engage without physical proximity. Although the three modes are possible within education services nowadays, the first mode emerges as the most influential scenario for enhancing the learning process in the specific context of vocational education institutions, thereby underscoring the profound significance of the place element.

Various studies concerning the place element within the marketing mix of education services have consistently highlighted the paramount importance of the geographical location and accessibility

of education institutions (Alimawi, 2021; Kotler & Fox, 1995). Additionally, the quality of the physical environment within and surrounding the education institution (Kotler & Fox, 1995), along with the availability of public and school transportation systems (Alimawi, 2021), emerge as significant factors shaping the place element. More specifically, Alimawi, (2021) underscores the potential impact of healthcare facilities, recreational amenities, a culturally enriching atmosphere, and enhanced interconnectivity among institution's facilities on the decision-making process of prospective users of education services.

The formulation of place elements for private VHS institutions encompasses several key components. These components include ensuring easy access to the school, convenient proximity to practical training locations, maintaining a safe school environment, implementing health and safety environment (HSE) and 5Ss (sort, straighten, sweep-and-clean, systemize, standardize) practices, providing accessible public or school-owned transportation options, offering dormitories or boarding houses coordinated by the institution, as well as selecting a location that is close to students' residences. Access, safety, transportation facilities, accommodations, and proximity to students' residences are considered essential components that prospective students typically evaluate. Moreover, private VHS distinguish themselves by emphasizing the implementation of HSE and 5Ss practices within the school environment, thereby fostering an industrial atmosphere unique to VHS institutions.

4. Promotion Element

The promotion element plays a critical role in shaping the brand image of education institutions, allowing them to establish distinct identities compared to their competitors. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of this element hinges on the successful fulfillment of roles by the other six elements: product, price, place, people, process, and physical evidence. This highlights the idea that promotional efforts undertaken by education service providers cannot compensate for weaknesses in the other elements. Instead, the promotion element serves as an essential means to communicate the strengths and merits of the institution across all six interconnected elements.

Various studies have unveiled multifaceted yet coherent aspects of the promotion element within the realm of education service marketing. Diverse channels are available for promoting education services, encompassing websites, electronic correspondence, newspapers, and television. Simultaneously, significant emphasis on promotional modalities is placed such as advertising, publicity or broadcasting, and education expos. Furthermore, Dally et al., (2021) emphasize a comprehensive approach to the promotional mix, which includes not only robust advertising but also personal selling, focusing on interaction between education service providers and users, sales promotion aimed at incentivizing prospective users, public relation efforts, word-of-mouth, and

the utilization of direct mail offerings as essential promotional considerations for education institutions.

Formulation of the promotion element for private VHS encompasses a spectrum of strategies and methods employed to reach prospective students. These strategies include digital avenues such as websites and social media, as well as traditional channels like print media and advertising. Furthermore, promotional activities, taking the form of open houses, exhibitions, and community-based events, remain prominent means of promoting private VHSs. These institutions often leverage school icons and flagship products that possess inherent appeal to promote their education services. Conversely, passive promotion methods, including word-of-mouth as well as overt-and-natural promotion, are also regarded as pivotal aspects indicative of effective performance in promoting VHSs' education service.

5. People Element

The people element encompasses all individuals within an education service institution. This element comprises any involved individuals, both directly and indirectly, in the education services, namely administrative boards, principals, teachers, students, as well as local entrepreneurs and communities, who are linked with the service institution. In a comprehensive manner, Dally et al., (2021) asserted this element included all actors involved in delivering education services, consuming it, as well as influencing the perceptions of its users, between education service provider personnel, users, and other individuals within the institution's environment. Additionally, it extends to all staff members interacting with service users, emphasizing diverse competencies including personal skills, technical expertise, and proficiency in delivering education services (Alimawi, 2021).

Private VHS institutions' people element is formulated to encompass the spectrum of human resources intrinsic. This includes not only the core personnel, such as school leaders, teaching staff, and administrative staff, but also extends to auxiliary staff, including security, janitorial, and cafeteria personnel. Furthermore, this formulation extends its purview to encompass individuals affiliated with private VHS institutions, either through direct engagement or indirect associations, covering students, alumni, partner institutions, and the local community. Although alumni and partner institutions may exist physically outside the immediate school environment, both are regarded as actively contributing to the promotion and functioning of private VHS institutions.

6. Process Element

The process element is pivotal in the marketing mix, particularly in educational services, resembling the lifeblood of the sector, encompassing activities in delivering and consuming services (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Numerous studies underscore its significance, identifying

effective teaching approaches and systems as vital in enhancing instruction quality and student learning. In education services, this element covers teaching methods, learning opportunities, practical training, assessment, learning activities, evaluation, staff recruitment, and student admissions. Indonesia's government has established specific standards for vocational high school processes in collaboration with industry partners (Kementerian Pendidikan, 2022).

The element of process is the element of process is hence comprehensively formulated comprising ten constituent components, each outlined as enhancements to the educational experiences within private VHS institutions, encompassing items below.

1. Classroom Learning Methods: thoughtfully designed approaches to classroom instruction aimed at enhancing students' knowledge acquisition.
2. Learning Opportunities: strategic mechanisms to provide students with diverse and meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom.
3. Practical Trainings: hands-on and experiential learning opportunities meticulously structured to enhance students' skill development.
4. Internship Locations: carefully selected settings where students can gain practical exposure and apply their vocational knowledge.
5. Internship Experiences: structured programs that immerse students in real-world vocational context to develop practical skills.
6. Internship-based Recruitment Opportunities: pathways for students to access career opportunities that arise from their internship experiences.
7. Learning Evaluation Methods: thoughtful methodologies to assess students' progress and mastery in both classroom and practical training aspects.
8. W-S-E (work-study-entrepreneurial) Awareness Introduction: initiatives aimed at introducing students to the concept and benefits of the W-S-E approach in their career development.
9. W-S-E Potential Assessment: assessment mechanisms to gauge students' suitability and potential for W-S-E initiatives.
10. W-S-E Mentoring: programs designed to provide guidance and support for students pursuing career development aligned with the W-S-E framework.

Classroom learning, practical training, and their corresponding evaluation methods are regarded as the primary focal points within the overarching process element in these education services. Concurrently, the items related to internships are meticulously formulated to accommodate the prevalent dual-learning system, which has emerged as the national education standard for VHS institutions stipulated by Indonesia's Ministry of Education. Furthermore, raising awareness,

potential assessment, and W-S-E mentoring are intimately intertwined with the career development trajectory of VHS students.

7. Physical Evidence Element

A variety of studies have illuminated the significance of physical evidence within education services, specifically referring to physical facilities. This grants physical evidence a critical role in the delivery of education services, as it constitutes the space for interaction between service providers and users, in this context, schools and students (Dally et al., 2021). Additionally, this element is recognized to affect the perception of education service users (Kotler & Fox, 1995). The physical evidence element in services, unlike tangible products, acts as a surrogate, especially in education, allowing students to tangibly experience the service. Facilities like libraries and labs play a crucial role in enhancing student satisfaction as consumers. (Alimawi, 2021).

The physical evidence element in education services is characterized by various indicators, including: (1) physical infrastructure like school buildings, classrooms, libraries, and sports facilities; (2) well-equipped libraries with relevant reading materials; (3) laboratory facilities for practical activities and experiments; (4) quality learning materials; (5) audio-visual aids such as projectors and speakers; and (6) supplementary materials like case studies and examples. These facilities are integral to this element. Recent developments also include digital facilities like learning materials and instructional videos, classified as components of physical evidence (Alimawi, 2021).

Within the formulation of the physical evidence element, careful consideration is given to the various facilities and infrastructure that constitute a private VHS institution. These encompass essential physical attributes such as school buildings, classrooms, practice workshops, libraries, sport facilities, and supporting amenities, all of which serve as tangible representations of the institution itself. Additionally, teaching aids as well as practical materials and equipment are thoughtfully integrated into this element, as they play a pivotal role in shaping and enriching the education processes offered by private VHS institutions.

In its entirety, a comprehensive compilation of 58 distinct components from seven marketing mix elements within private VHS institutions has been organized into succinct instrumental statements. This structuring aims to facilitate the evaluation of students' perceptions of the marketing mix, achieved through a Likert scale-based assessment instrument. This method offers a reliable means of comprehensively understanding and analyzing the effectiveness of marketing mix strategies in private VHS institutions.

Expert Judgement

The formulated marketing mix elements underwent a systematic review process through expert evaluation. This iterative step is crucial to validate the alignment of these elements with the unique context of private VHS institutions. To ensure a comprehensive assessment, three experts specialising in VHS development and two experts in marketing management conduct separate reviews, drawing from their respective areas of expertise within the domains of education marketing. This multifaceted expert judgement process contributes to the refinement and validation of the formulated marketing mix elements.

The three VHS development experts predominantly focused on evaluating the product and process elements. Within the product element, a specific component, the concept of teaching factory was elucidated as an integral component of the process element. This pedagogical model entails the integration of practical industrial learning, typically in the realm of manufacturing, within an authentic working environment (Mavrikios et al., 2019). The adoption of the teaching factory approach offers students the opportunity to immerse themselves in specialised industrial competencies and develop a holistic understanding of the entire industrial cycle. Consequently, this exposure fosters a broader perspective and cultivates entrepreneurial interests within the specific industrial domain (Purwanto et al., 2022).

In conjunction with the teaching factory, the review process identified problem-based learning and project-based learning as essential additions to the process element. Ariyanto et al., (2020) highlighted the effectiveness of problem-based learning in enhancing students' critical thinking abilities within VHSs' education process, involving student in industry-relevant discussions, debates, and problem-solving activities. Similarly, Eliza et al., (2019) have demonstrated that the application of project-based learning yields notable improvements in students' overall learning outcomes, particularly in psychomotor domains. Engaging students in diverse learning tasks, encompassing design, execution, as well as reporting, has been recognised for its role in enhancing students' psychomotor skills.

The internship program within the process element is a vital component intricately linked to students' career development. This initiative is recognised as a potent avenue for bolstering the integration of VHS graduates into the industry (Akbar et al., 2022). Notably, the internship experience plays a pivotal role in shaping the motivation and preparedness of VHS students for their entry into the industry (Yusadinata et al., 2021). Moreover, this hands-on exposure has demonstrated a substantial influence on cultivating students' heightened interest in and readiness for entrepreneurship (Lestari & Hayati, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to ensure the alignment of internship with both the competencies imparted by VHS institution and those demanded by the industry, making it a crucial addition to the process element.

Further in the context of process element, an extensive examination of learning evaluation methods has unveiled two distinct categories: learning assessments which relies on traditional testing and learning assessments which considers a broader range of evidence showcasing students' skills and capabilities. Vocational high schools employ a spectrum of assessment types to gauge student learning outcomes, encompassing performance assessments, assignments, project deliverables, compilation of student works, and written examinations (Kembaren, 2022; Kementerian Pendidikan, 2015). In accordance with insights from VHS development experts, these diverse assessment methods can be neatly classified into two primary domains: exam-based assessment and portfolio-based assessment.

Currently, VHS institutions are strongly encouraged to embrace portfolio-based assessment approaches for appraising student learning outcomes. This method not only assesses student achievements derived from examinations and assigned tasks but also considers other forms of evidence that substantiate their skill sets. The shift towards portfolio-based assessments aligns with modern education, offering holistic evaluation of students' abilities and fostering skill development.

In parallel, insight provided by two experts in the field of marketing management aimed to enhance aspects related to standardised attire within the physical evidence element. These aspects can be further delineated into two categories: uniforms designed for both teachers and staff members, and uniforms tailored for students. Uniform attire represents a tangible component in the marketing of education service, in which education institutions typically offer uniquely and attractively designed uniforms, thus creating a distinct appeal in their education service marketing and setting them apart from competitors (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016).

Uniform clothing significantly contributes to the physical evidence element, exerting influence over prospective students' choices when selecting an education institution (Onsardi et al., 2021). Moreover, uniforms serve as a means of communication with consumers and are employed to convey corporate values to customers (Puspita, 2015). Similarly, VHS institutions also share an interest in conveying specific values and characteristics to their students through uniforms. Dress code implementation within education institutions is also appended into the physical evidence element.

Each of the five experts, particularly the one that also specialises in psychometrics, has further provided valuable insight regarding the selection of appropriate language, based on both contextual relevance and theoretical suitability. These reviews, regarding the substance of the instrument's statements, include recommendations to enhance the clarity of specific items through operational delimitation, aiming to ensure alignment with context and comprehensibility for VHS students as its users. Subsequent to expert assessment, the instrument, initially composed of 58 components, expanded to 65 components.

Instrument's Validity and Reliability

Refined through an expert judgment process, the instruments assessing the formulated marketing mix elements were then pilot-tested to evaluate their validity and reliability. This multifaceted approach ensures that the instruments are not only well-crafted but also capable of effectively evaluating the marketing mix elements tailored for private VHS institutions. This process lays a solid foundation for their practical application and further research in the realm of private vocational education.

The instrument's validity is assessed using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients. The results indicate that the majority of the 65 statement items, specifically 52 statement items, achieved significance at the 0.01 level, then eight statement items attained significance at the 0.05 level, while a minor subset of five statement items did not reach any significance. These non-significant statement items are the components of (1.9) outstanding graduates, (3.2) access to practical training location, (3.5) public transportation options, (3.8) location close to students' residences, and (4.8) word-of-mouth.

The instrument's reliability was assessed through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.956 for the entire instrument. This value indicates excellent reliability, surpassing the threshold of 0.900 set by George & Mallery, (2003). Furthermore, the instrument meets the minimum criteria established by Nunnally & Bernstein, (1994) for supporting decision-making, particularly in the context of marketing strategies for private VHS institutions, where a minimum value of 0.950 is required. Refer to Figure 1 for the IBM SPSS output displaying the Cronbach's Alpha.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.956	65

Figure 1. IBM SPSS's reliability output

Following the evaluation of overall instrument reliability, the individual statement items were subjected to testing for their item reliability. While the majority of the tested statement items demonstrated reliability, it is important to note that some items may warrant consideration for removal. Specifically, items with corrected item-total correlation smaller than 0.300 (Azwar, 2012) and items that, when removed, result in higher Cronbach's Alpha values than the overall instrument's Cronbach's Alpha (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) may need further evaluation for their inclusion in the final instrument. This process ensures the overall reliability and validity of the assessment tool.

It is revealed that five items exhibited a corrected item-total correlation value below the acceptable threshold of 0.300, namely items of (1.9) outstanding graduates, (3.2) access to practical training location, (3.5) public transportation options, (3.8) location close to students' residences, and (4.8) word-of-mouth, which are consistent with the non-significant items on Pearson's Product Moment result. These items warrant consideration for removal from this instrument.

In subsequent, three of the five statement items, which are item (3.5) public transportation options, (3.8) location close to students' residences, and (4.8) word-of-mouth, are strongly recommended for removal from the instrument. This recommendation is based on the observation that their removal would result in higher Cronbach's Alpha value compared to the overall instrument Cronbach's Alpha of 0.956. The specific reasons for eliminating these items are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha statistics

Label	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted*	Component
1.9	0,277	0,955	outstanding graduates
3.2	0,277	0,956	access to practical training location
3.5	0,157	0,957	public transportation options,
3.8	0,137	0,957	location close to students' residences
4.8	0,135	0,957	word-of-mouth

*overall instrument's Cronbach's Alpha valued 0.956

In the final analysis, 60 items are retained in the instrument, thus constituting a distinct marketing mix construct specifically designed for private VHS institutions. Table 2 presents the formulated marketing mix elements, and a visual representation of these elements can be found in Figure 2. This construct will serve as a valuable tool for enhancing marketing strategies in private VHS settings.

Table 2. Formulated marketing mix elements tailored for private VHS institutions

Element	Component
1. Product	1. Vocational Majors
	2. Curriculum
	3. Competent Teaching Staffs
	4. Extracurricular Activities
	5. Supporting Competencies
2. Price	1. Tuition and Target Market
	2. Tuition and Education Quality
	3. Tuition and Character Development Value
3. Place	1. Access to School
	6. School-owned Transportation Options

Element	Component
	2. Access to Practical Training Location* 3. Safe School Environment 4. Implementation of HSE and 5Ss Practices 5. Public Transportation Options*
	7. Dormitories or Coordinated Boarding House 8. Location Close to Students' Residences*
4. Promotion	1. Website 2. Social Media 3. Print Media 4. Advertising 5. Open Houses or Exhibitions
	6. Community-based Events 7. School Icon and Flagship Products 8. Word-of-Mouth* 9. Overt-and-Natural Promotion
5. People	1. School Leaders 2. Teaching Staffs 3. Administrative Staffs 4. Auxiliary Staffs
	5. Students 6. Alumni 7. Partner Institutions 8. Local Community
6. Process	1. Classroom Learning Methods 2. Learning Opportunities 3. Practical Trainings 4. Problem-based Learning 5. Project-based Learning 6. Teaching Factory 7. Internship Locations 8. Internship Alignment
	9. Internship Experiences 10. Internship-Based Recruitment Opportunities 11. Examination-based Learning Assessment 12. Portfolio-based Learning Assessment 13. W-S-E Awareness Introduction 14. W-S-E Potential Assessment 15. W-S-E Mentoring
7. Physical Evidence	1. School Buildings 2. Classrooms 3. Teaching Aids 4. Practice Workshops 5. Practical Materials and Equipment
	6. Libraries 7. Sport Facilities 8. Supporting Amenities 9. Staffs' Uniforms 10. Students' Uniforms
*non-significant components	

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to seek for marketing mix elements, which are specifically suitable for private vocational high schools in Indonesia. Education marketing has been an attractive field for decades; however, it has stayed still in the higher education level. Whilst education institutions in primary and secondary level faced the same challenge in marketing, particularly private institutions. The specific topic of marketing mix itself is saturated with higher education level, leaving voids in the fields of vocational high school yet. This formulation is uttered in response to the needs of basis for further marketing studies in the vocational high school level.

The novel marketing mix elements introduced in this study offer the potential to transform education marketing for private VHS institutions, catering to the unique characteristics of this sector and enhancing their market impact. These formulations have the capacity to reshape

perceptions and preferences for education services, creating a distinct market presence that resonates in a competitive landscape. Moreover, these elements are expected to serve as valuable inputs for various analytical tools in marketing management, providing nuanced insights into consumer behavior, market trends, and competitive positioning. Their integration into established frameworks empowers practitioners to make informed decisions, driving sustainable growth for private VHS institutions.

However, this study's focus solely on private VHS institutions implementing the center of excellence program by the ministry of education poses limitations to the formulation's generalizability. Further development is needed to tailor these elements to specific contexts within private VHS institutions, such as industry-owned institutions, those inclusive of differently-abled students, or religious-based boarding VHS. Expanding the scope to address these specific scenarios could enhance the relevance and applicability of the proposed elements within the diverse landscape of private VHS institutions.

These elements require further validation through the application of appropriate tools, such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). By employing this analysis, we can empirically validate their applicability and potential impact within private VHS contexts. This rigorous approach would not only enhance the credibility of the proposed elements but also provide valuable insights to refine and optimise private VHS marketing strategies based on solid statistical evidence.

In conclusion, this study pioneers a tailored approach to education marketing for private vocational high schools. The novel marketing mix elements introduced here offer transformative potential, promising to reshape strategies and enhance the feasibility of these institutions. While acknowledging limitations, further development and empirical validation are poised to harness the full impact of these elements guiding the growth and influence of private vocational high schools in a dynamic educational landscape.

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Figure 2. Private VHS marketing mix in an infographic

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