

# Exploring the Marketing Mix (7P) Factors in Students' Decision Making to Choose a Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya

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**Abstract.** The importance of education in national progress necessitates strategic measures to enhance its quality, especially in facing global competition and economic integration like the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). This study examines the impact of the 7P Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence) on student enrollment decisions in the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Tasikmalaya. Using a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and data analysis through NVivo software, the research explores the factors influencing student choices. Results indicate that the Product element—represented by a curriculum aligned with digital era demands—alongside affordable tuition fees (Price) and strategic campus location (Place), are the most significant determinants. Additionally, social media promotions (Promotion) and the perceived competence of faculty (People) play key roles in shaping student perceptions. Despite some concerns about accreditation and facilities, students value project-based learning and financial support options. The findings highlight the effectiveness of employing an integrated 7P strategy in enhancing program appeal and competitiveness. The study contributes valuable insights for educational institutions aiming to optimize their marketing strategies and better align their offerings with market needs.

**Keywords:** Marketing Mix 7P, Student Decision-Making, Digital Business Education, Curriculum Alignment, Higher Education Marketing.

## Introduction

Education holds a vital role in the sustainability and progress of a nation. People rely on education to expand their knowledge and skills, which not only supports their daily lives but also contributes to the advancement of society and the nation as a whole. Moreover, high-quality education is essential to face the increasingly intense global competition. Globalization and the emergence of free markets, such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), underscore the need for skilled and competent human resources. In this context, schools and universities, as educational institutions, play a strategic role in producing quality human resources capable of competing on an international level (Abdillah & Herawati, 2018).

The rapid advancement of digital technology in recent years has significantly impacted the field of education, particularly in preparing young generations to face global challenges. Technology not only drives innovation but also influences various operational aspects in both the business and education sectors. In response to the evolving market demands, educational institutions such as the Digital Business Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Tasikmalaya are working to integrate digital and business elements. Amidst competition among higher education institutions to attract prospective students, it's crucial to understand the factors influencing students' decisions in choosing study programs that align with contemporary needs.

Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that the marketing mix comprises seven key elements (7P: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence), which are used to understand how organizations influence consumer behavior. In the context of education, this marketing mix can be applied to

analyze the factors that drive prospective students to choose a digital business study program. Each element of the 7P mix plays a critical role, from the quality of the program (product) and the costs involved (price) to the institution's reputation and campus facilities (physical evidence).

The 7P marketing mix—comprising Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—has traditionally been applied in the business sector to achieve marketing goals and enhance customer loyalty (Ramadani, 2020). This strategy tactically influences consumer purchase decisions through its various elements, as evidenced in multiple prior studies (Abroor et al., 2024). However, this research takes a unique perspective by applying the 7P model in the education sector, specifically to understand the factors influencing students' decision-making in selecting the Digital Business Program at UPI Tasikmalaya.

The Marketing Mix approach has long been utilized in the business world and is now increasingly adapted to the education sector. The 7P concept within the Marketing Mix—comprising Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing and formulating educational marketing strategies (A. Kusumawati, 2019). Applying the Marketing Mix in education presents new opportunities to enhance competitiveness and attract prospective students. The 7P framework allows schools to analyze and create effective and well-rounded marketing strategies.

Recent studies indicate that applying the Marketing Mix in education significantly influences school selection decisions and increases enrollment rates. Research by Rahman et al. (2020) reveals that the elements of Product and People have the strongest impact on students' choice of higher education institutions. Meanwhile, Alonderiene & Klimaviciene (2023) found that Physical Evidence, particularly in the form of modern facilities and a conducive learning environment, plays an essential role in building a positive perception among prospective students. A study by Chen & Lin (2021) emphasizes the importance of integrated Promotion strategies, especially through digital platforms, in reaching and attracting Generation Z. Additionally, Nguyen et al. (2022) highlight the critical role of Process in ensuring educational quality and student satisfaction, which in turn boosts retention and positive referrals. Furthermore, comprehensive research by Soedarto et al. (2024) demonstrates that a holistic implementation of the 7P framework can significantly enhance an educational institution's competitiveness, with Price and Place also playing important roles in an increasingly competitive education market. By understanding the needs and desires of their target market, schools can develop strategies that effectively achieve their objectives.

In the educational context, Product refers to the educational programs and services offered by the institution. Price relates to the cost of education and available financing schemes. Place denotes the school's location and its accessibility. Promotion encompasses various communication and marketing efforts carried out by the institution (N. L. Rahmawati & Saino, 2020). People in this context involves all school staff, including teachers and employees, who interact directly with students and parents. Process refers to the systems and procedures implemented in delivering educational services. Finally, Physical Evidence pertains to the physical facilities and school environment that can influence the perceptions of prospective students and their parents (R. Astuti et al., 2020).

Tjiptono (2020) also states that the marketing mix is an effective strategy for understanding consumer preferences. He emphasizes that a deep understanding of the elements within the marketing mix can help educational institutions tailor their marketing strategies to meet the needs and expectations of prospective students. This study aims to explore the marketing mix factors (7P) that influence students' decisions in choosing the Digital Business Program at UPI Tasikmalaya. It is hoped that this understanding will contribute significantly to the development of more effective marketing strategies for educational institutions.

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory research design. This approach was chosen to gain deeper insights into students' understanding, motivations, and perceptions in deciding to choose the Digital Business Program at UPI Tasikmalaya. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method, allowing for flexibility in gathering information and providing participants the opportunity to share their experiences in detail.

This study involves 10 students from the 2024 cohort of the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya as participants. The participants were selected using the snowball sampling method, where the class president recommended other students from the same program. This approach aims to gather in-depth insights from students who have relevant experiences and are able to reflect on their decision-making process in choosing the Digital Business study program.

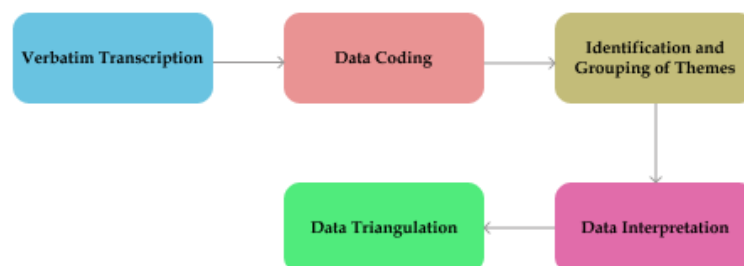
Data collection was conducted through face-to-face semi-structured interviews, designed to foster deeper interaction between the researcher and participants. This approach allows the researcher to not only listen to the answers but also observe participants' facial expressions and body language, which can provide additional context and enrich the understanding of the responses. Each interview lasted approximately 25-30 minutes and took place on the UPI Tasikmalaya campus, in a comfortable and quiet location to create a conducive environment for participants to feel more at ease and honest in sharing their perspectives. To support the effectiveness of the interviews, the researcher also developed a structured instrument framework as a guide, ensuring that the information gathered was focused and comprehensive.

**Table 1.** Interview Guideline Framework

<b>Subvariabel/Aspek</b>	<b>Indikator</b>
1. <i>Product</i>	1. Curriculum 2. Student Association 3. Program Accreditation 4. Teaching and Learning Activities
2. <i>Price</i>	1. UKT Fees 2. Initial Payment Fees 3. Availability of Payment Relief
3. <i>Place</i>	1. Easily Accessible Location 2. Safe Environment 3. Spacious Location or Area
4. <i>Promotion</i>	1. Knowing the program from relatives 2. Knowing the program from social media 3. Knowing the program from the website
5. <i>People</i>	1. Lecturers have relevant educational backgrounds. 2. Lecturers' ability to teach and educate. 3. Lecturers' level of education. 4. Presence of outstanding students. 5. Presence of relatives.
6. <i>Process</i>	1. Ease of accessing information. 2. Availability of payment explanations. 3. Clear program regulations. 4. Ease of payment.
5. <i>Physical Evidence</i>	1. Completeness of facilities and infrastructure. 2. Classroom comfort. 3. Campus cleanliness. 4. Achievements attained.

The interviews focused on aspects of the Marketing Mix (7P), consisting of Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence, and how these relate to the participants' reasons for choosing the Digital Business Study Program. All interviews were recorded (with participant consent) to facilitate transcription and further analysis.

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves several stages, including:



**Figure 1.** Data Analysis Technique

The initial stage is **Verbatim Transcription**, which emphasizes the process of accurately transcribing the interview results. Following this, in the **Data Coding stage**, participants' responses are categorized using codes that correspond to the themes of the Marketing Mix (7P). This process involves marking specific segments of the interview transcripts that are relevant to elements such as product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Next, **Theme Identification and Grouping** are performed to highlight the process of identifying patterns from the participants' responses and grouping themes to find emerging connections. Afterward, **Data Interpretation** occurs, where the relationship between the Marketing Mix factors and students' decisions is explained in detail. Finally, **Data Triangulation** is carried out, where the researcher compares responses from various participants and conducts cross-checking.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

The analysis using NVivo through hierarchical visualization reveals a clear grouping of seven key elements in the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya: People, Place, Price, Process, Product, Promotion, and Physical Evidence. Each of these elements comprises interconnected subcomponents that mutually influence one another, creating a comprehensive understanding of the student experience.

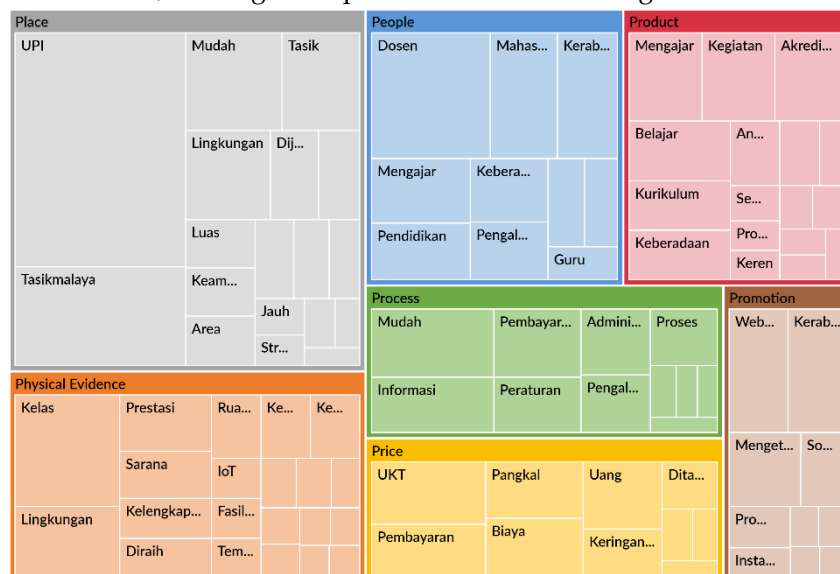


Figure 2. Hierarchical Visualization

The **Product** element within the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya comprises several key components grouped by thematic similarity. The items Project, Semester, and Enjoy reflect that students greatly value project-based learning throughout the semester, considering it enjoyable and relevant to their needs in the digital age. Accreditation is also identified within the same cluster, highlighting students' recognition of academic credibility as a crucial factor in their decision-making, influencing their future career prospects. The indicators Teaching, Learning, and Activities demonstrate a strong interaction between the learning process and student participation in organizational activities, suggesting that involvement in initiatives like Dignity enriches their educational experience.

The analysis further reveals that the **Price** element consists of interconnected components such as Costs, Reductions, and Financial Aspects, indicating significant student attention to educational expenses. The clustering of items Payment and SNBT highlights the importance of payment processes, with students focusing on available facilities related to payment and their understanding of financial burdens. Additionally, scholarships and the UKT model are critical considerations for students, who are keenly aware of the viability and options for financial support.

Similarly, the **Place** element consists of interconnected components that underline the importance of campus accessibility. Items like Accessibility, Safety, and Strategic highlight that students consider these factors crucial in their decision-making; varying perceptions of campus location and proximity to home reflect differing considerations among students.

In the **Promotion** element, recommendations from family, particularly parents, significantly influence student decisions, underscoring the value of familial input. Moreover, reliance on digital platforms like

Instagram and official websites for information demonstrates the impact of effective online marketing strategies in attracting prospective students.

Regarding the **People** element, students prioritize the quality and competence of faculty, valuing educators with both academic credentials and relevant practical experience in digital business. Interactions with peers foster a collaborative academic environment, enhancing the educational experience.

The **Process** element emphasizes the need for clarity and ease in administrative procedures, with students appreciating simple processes and transparent information regarding registration and payment systems.

Lastly, the **Physical Evidence** element underscores the importance of a clean and conducive learning environment, linking physical conditions with academic success. Good facilities facilitate social interactions and collaborative learning, while challenges related to cleanliness point to areas needing improvement.

Overall, the visualization highlights the complex interrelationships among these elements, providing insight into what students value within their educational experience at the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya.

## Discussion

Based on the research conducted, the marketing strategy applied by the Digital Business Study Program at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI) Tasikmalaya can be analyzed through the Marketing Mix approach, particularly using the 7P concept. This study aims to explore how the elements within the Marketing Mix influence students' decisions in choosing the Digital Business Study Program. Through interviews with students from the 2024 batch, the researcher identified that this study program has implemented all seven elements of the 7P in its marketing strategy. These elements include:

The **Product** in the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya, which includes the curriculum, student association, program accreditation, and teaching-learning activities, shows that this program holds a unique appeal for students. Most of the respondents stated that the curriculum is relevant to the current needs of the digital business world, although many of them only knew the general outline of the curriculum focus before joining. After attending classes, they found that the materials delivered were in line with expectations and provided new insights, especially regarding the application of digital technology in business. As one respondent shared, *"I want to learn business, but focusing only on business without digital aspects feels incomplete. That's why I chose digital business so I can keep up with the times and gain more skills to compete."*

The existence of the student association has not significantly influenced the initial decision to choose this program, but after joining, activities within the association, such as Dignity, added value by providing opportunities for beneficial organizational experiences. Program accreditation was also considered important by the respondents, particularly in supporting career prospects and scholarship opportunities. Although some students initially had doubts because the accreditation had not yet reached an excellent level, they remained optimistic that the program would develop over time.

Regarding teaching-learning activities, students generally expected a balanced learning experience between theory and practice. Project-based and collaborative activities, particularly in UI/UX, application development, and business ideas, mostly met their expectations. Therefore, although there were initial concerns about the curriculum and accreditation, most respondents felt that the aspects of the Product offered by the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya were sufficiently relevant and aligned with their needs.

**Price** is an important consideration for students when choosing the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya. The majority of respondents feel that the UKT fees they pay are reasonable and proportionate to the facilities provided, although some students, especially those in the highest payment category, feel that the fees are quite high. For students admitted through the independent selection pathway, the initial tuition fee was a barrier, while students accepted through the SNBP and SNBT pathways generally did not incur an initial tuition fee, so this factor was not a major issue for them. As one respondent mentioned, *"I think the tuition fee is normal and still affordable. Since there's no down payment, it wasn't a consideration when choosing the program. The payment relief policy is also a great help for students who need financial assistance to continue their studies."*

Additionally, the availability of payment relief programs, such as UKT installment payments, was considered very helpful for students facing financial difficulties, although most respondents had not yet utilized these relief options. Regardless of the varying views on costs, overall, the Price aspect was deemed acceptable by students because they see promising career prospects in the digital business field. As a result,

the educational investment they made is considered worthwhile given the benefits and future opportunities offered by this program.

**Place** is an aspect that has varying perspectives among the respondents regarding the Digital Business Study Program at the University of Education Indonesia (UPI) Tasikmalaya. Most respondents consider the campus location to be quite strategic as it is situated in the city center, making it easily accessible, especially for students living around Tasikmalaya. However, for those from outside the city, such as Bandung and Sukabumi, the campus location is seen as less ideal due to its lack of direct connection to major public transportation routes like train stations and bus terminals, making access to the campus more difficult. As one respondent mentioned, *"At first, I was confused about the accessibility to UPI Tasikmalaya because I wasn't familiar with the area. I initially thought the Digital Business program was located somewhere else because I saw the IoT lab facilities, but I was glad to find out in advance that it's in Tasik."*

In terms of security, most respondents feel that the campus environment is relatively safe, although there are concerns about occasional criminal activities in the area around the campus, particularly at night. Regarding the size of the campus, respondents generally feel that UPI Tasikmalaya has limited land, which does not meet their expectations, especially when compared to the main UPI campus in Bumi Siliwangi, Bandung. Some students expressed disappointment with the limited facilities and cramped spaces, which they felt were inadequate to support teaching and learning activities. As another respondent shared, *"As for security, I feel safe so far. I only realized the campus area's size after being accepted, and I feel the campus deserves to have a bigger space."*

Despite these shortcomings in the Place aspect, the decision to choose the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya was still driven by academic appeal and the promising career prospects in the digital business field. Ultimately, students prioritized the relevance of the curriculum and potential for personal development over factors such as location and campus size. Overall, the Place aspect is considered adequate by most respondents, though there is room for improvement regarding accessibility and campus facility development.

**Promotion** plays a significant role in influencing prospective students' decisions to choose the Digital Business Study Program at the University of Education Indonesia (UPI) Tasikmalaya. Based on the interviews, there are various sources of information used by students before making their decision. Social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, has become the primary platform introducing this study program. Many respondents found engaging content from the program's official accounts and testimonials from senior students, which effectively sparked their interest. Posts about achievements, academic activities, and organizational events also strengthened prospective students' attraction to the program. As one respondent mentioned, *"I first learned about the Digital Business program at UPI Tasikmalaya from Instagram. I originally wanted to study business, but I wanted something more specific, so I looked into digital business and found that it was a new program. I felt it was perfect for me because I wanted to be in business in the digital transition era. After seeing it on Instagram, I checked the website, but the information there didn't fully satisfy my curiosity, so I continued searching on Twitter."*

In addition to social media, some respondents also obtained information from the official UPI website, which provided details about the curriculum and facilities offered. However, some felt that the information on the website still needs to be improved to be more comprehensive and informative. Meanwhile, a number of students learned about the program through recommendations from relatives, such as older students, teachers, or family members who had knowledge of the program's reputation. However, promotions through relatives were less influential compared to social media. Overall, the promotion strategy utilizing social media proved to be more effective in attracting prospective students, followed by information from the official website. This indicates that a strong and targeted digital marketing strategy is crucial in enhancing the visibility and appeal of the study program among prospective students. While recommendations from relatives are useful, they tend to have less impact compared to the influence of social media and official websites.

**People** is one of the important factors influencing prospective students' decisions to choose the Digital Business Study Program at the University of Education Indonesia (UPI) Tasikmalaya. Based on the interviews, it is evident that the quality of lecturers and the student community play a significant role in attracting prospective students. Most respondents indicated that the lecturers' ability to teach and the interactive teaching methods were crucial factors. Lecturers with relevant educational backgrounds and practical experience in digital business were considered to enhance the quality of learning, especially in practice-based projects that align with the industry. As one respondent mentioned, *"I prefer younger lecturers because they are more open and easier to connect with. The ability of the lecturer is important because the mindset"*

*between younger and older lecturers is different. Although I don't know their educational background, their teaching style still affects me."*

Although the formal educational level of the lecturers is not always the main consideration, respondents valued lecturers who applied an approach that was practical and supported students' understanding. Additionally, the presence of outstanding students in the study program positively influenced the decision of prospective students. Student participation in various national and international competitions served as additional motivation for prospective students who wanted to join an active and accomplished community. On the other hand, the influence of relatives, such as recommendations from seniors or family members, was relatively minimal. Most respondents relied more on information gathered through personal experience or online searches. One respondent noted, *"I don't have any relatives here, and my family initially didn't agree, but I pushed through because I really wanted to join the Digital Business program at UPI."*

Overall, the People factor, which includes the quality of lecturers and the presence of high-achieving students, is a major attraction that drives prospective students to choose the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya. The quality of academic interactions and the competitive learning environment are seen as key elements supporting academic and career success in the digital business field.

**Process** is a crucial factor in the decision-making process for prospective students in choosing the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya. Based on the interviews, the majority of respondents noted that the ease of the administrative process and access to information are valuable aspects of the program. Information related to registration procedures, curriculum, and selection can be easily accessed through various channels, such as social media, the official website, and WhatsApp groups. This availability of information instills confidence in prospective students when making their decisions. These factors help students understand the stages of registration and the necessary administrative processes. As one respondent shared, *"Information about the Digital Business program was easy to access, but the administration was a bit difficult because UPI was late, and other campuses had already started the re-registration process. I was alone in Tasik, so I didn't know who to ask for updates. Despite that, the program's regulations were clear, and the ease of payment did influence my decision, even though my dad was the one paying."*

However, some respondents pointed out challenges in the initial socialization of the administrative schedule and payment procedures, which were sometimes poorly coordinated, leading to confusion, especially for new students. On the other hand, the ease of UKT (Single Tuition Fee) payment was considered a strong attraction. Many respondents appreciated the availability of payment options such as installment plans, which were especially helpful for those facing financial difficulties, demonstrating the university's commitment to supporting students' well-being.

Furthermore, the transparency of the study program's regulations provided at the beginning of the academic year was also appreciated by students. This clarity gave them a sense of comfort and clear direction throughout their studies. However, there were suggestions to improve the socialization of campus rules, especially for better adaptation of new students.

Overall, the Process factor in the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya was rated positively, with strengths in easy access to information, smooth administrative processes, and payment flexibility. These aspects not only streamline the registration process but also contribute to a more comfortable and structured learning experience, thereby enhancing student satisfaction and loyalty to the program.

**Physical Evidence** in the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya varies in the perspectives of the respondents regarding the adequacy of physical facilities. The majority of respondents believe that the infrastructure, such as classrooms and laboratories, is sufficient, although some areas still need improvement. Supportive facilities, such as comfortable classrooms with air conditioning (AC) and collaborative learning areas like the "digital garden," were seen as enhancing the learning experience and providing a more enjoyable and supportive environment. However, some respondents complained about the limited classroom space, which often becomes overcrowded, especially during peak hours, reducing comfort during classes. As one respondent mentioned, *"The facilities for the Digital Business program are still lacking, especially digital facilities like computers. Comfort in the classroom is really important to me, I feel more comfortable in the classroom rather than in IoT labs. The cleanliness of the classrooms is fine, but the toilets need improvement."*

Classroom comfort was considered important by almost all respondents, with well-maintained and clean rooms seen as conducive to improving focus and enthusiasm for learning. However, there were complaints about cleanliness in certain areas of the campus, particularly during the rainy season, which

made the environment muddy and dirty. The ongoing construction on campus was also seen as negatively impacting cleanliness and comfort, which affected some students' experiences.

In addition, the achievements of the Digital Business Study Program were seen as a value-added factor for prospective students. Several respondents expressed pride in the program's success, such as student victories in national and international competitions, which provided extra motivation for them to choose and join this program. As one student shared, "*The achievements of the program are motivating because they make me excited to contribute.*"

Overall, the Physical Evidence factor plays a significant role in the decision-making process for prospective students choosing the Digital Business Study Program at UPI Tasikmalaya. While there are still some shortcomings in terms of facilities and cleanliness, the academic achievements and the comfortable learning environment remain positive points that influence their decision to become part of this program.

## Conclusion

This research explores how the marketing mix (7Ps) impacts students' decisions to enroll in the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Tasikmalaya. The results show that critical factors such as Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence significantly affect students' choices. Among these, the quality of the program, affordable tuition fees, and the strategic location of the campus were most influential. Although some concerns were raised about accreditation and facilities, students appreciated the curriculum that meets the needs of the digital age. Additionally, social media promotions played a significant role in attracting prospective students. The findings emphasize the importance of an integrated marketing strategy that effectively uses the 7Ps to improve the appeal of academic programs and maintain competitiveness in the higher education sector.

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