

Transformation of Marketing Management of Private Institutions in the Era of Global Competition

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: Apr 23, 2024
Revised: Jun 11, 2024
Accepted: Jul 30, 2024

Keywords:

Digitalization, education
consumer preferences,
global competition,
marketing strategy
transformation

ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving preferences of education consumers and the strategic transformations private education institutions require to remain competitive in a globalized environment. The study uses a qualitative approach and a case study design to examine how consumer preferences have changed and how private educational institutions have adjusted their marketing tactics in response to international competition. Data collection techniques were in-depth interviews, document analysis, and marketing practice observations. Triangulation techniques were applied to ensure data validity, while thematic analysis was used to uncover patterns and key themes. The findings reveal a significant shift towards global skills-based education preferences, highlighting the critical role of digitalization in educational marketing and the challenges posed by accessibility gaps resulting from commercialization. Despite the potential of technology to broaden access and enhance transparency, high costs remain a substantial barrier for many. The study underscores the necessity of collaboration among governments, private sectors, and non-profit organizations to formulate inclusive policies that guarantee equitable access to quality education. The insights and strategic frameworks derived from this research offer valuable guidance for institutions seeking to navigate the dynamic landscape of global education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, people's preferences for education have changed significantly. Education consumers, in this case students and parents, are increasingly selective in educational institutions (Canada, 2019). The main factor influencing this preference is the increasing awareness of the importance of quality education to compete globally (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023; Welch et al., 2024). This phenomenon can be seen in the surge in demand for institutions that offer international curricula, modern facilities, and programs that develop 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and multilingual communication (Al Fawaz, 2024). On the other hand, globalization also creates new challenges for private educational institutions, especially in marketing. This shift in preference forces institutions to adopt more innovative marketing strategies, such as utilizing digital media to expand the reach of information and build the institution's image. Data shows that parents tend to be more interested in schools that actively promote student achievements in academic and non-academic fields (Batari & Savira, 2022).

In addition, the institution's involvement in social activities or global issues, such as environmental sustainability and social inclusion, is an added value that is highly considered by consumers (Ma'arif et al., 2023). However, there is a controversial social fact in this change: the commercialization of education. Many parties criticize private institutions as too profit-oriented, so education becomes more expensive and difficult for the middle and lower economic classes. This increases the gap in access to quality education between groups of people (Edo & Yasin, 2024). On the other hand, this criticism encourages institutions to find creative solutions, such as providing merit-based scholarships, cross-subsidy programs, or cooperation with government and non-profit organizations. This shift in education consumer preferences reflects a more significant social dynamic, namely, people's desire to obtain education services relevant to future needs (Iswahyudi et al., 2023). Transforming the marketing management of private educational institutions is important to answer this challenge while ensuring that education remains accessible to various levels of society (Prabowo & Hafid, 2024).

Shifting preferences of education consumers have been the focus of many researchers in recent years, especially in globalization and digital transformation. One of the relevant studies is the study by Lim et al. (2020), which underlines the importance of value-based marketing strategies to attract education consumers. They emphasize that education is no longer seen as a basic need but also as an investment in the future, so educational institutions must understand consumer preferences better through in-depth market research. Another study investigated how globalization affects higher education marketing (Maisah et al., 2020; Wiguna et al., 2023; Munawwaroh & Rahayu, 2024). The study found that educational institutions that can adapt their curriculum and services to the global market's needs tend to be more desirable. They also highlight the important role of institutional image in influencing consumer decisions, especially in choosing private higher education (Prabowo et al., 2024).

At the national level, research by Armayani et al. (2021) highlights the role of social media in education marketing in Indonesia. Their study shows that digital platforms like Instagram and Facebook have become highly effective tools for building relationships with prospective students and parents (Nurmalasari & Masitoh, 2020). The study also found that parents are more interested in institutions that actively demonstrate transparency, accountability, and student achievement through digital media. Meanwhile, Tambunan (2020) examined the impact of an international-based curriculum on community preferences for private schools in major Indonesian cities. The study revealed that more and more parents prioritize globally oriented education, such as that offered by private schools, to prepare their children for global challenges. These previous studies show that shifts in education consumer preferences are influenced by globalization, technological transformation, and institutional image. This research provides an important basis for developing marketing strategies relevant to today's society's needs and expectations.

This research offers significant novelty in understanding the shifting preferences of education consumers, especially in the context of private education institutions in the era of global competition. In previous studies, many studies focused on individual aspects such as the influence of globalization, the use of digital technology, or the importance of institutional image in attracting prospective students. However, this research integrates these elements into a holistic approach that combines marketing management transformation with changing consumer preferences in a comprehensive manner (Rahmasari, 2023; Prabowo & Aimah, 2024). research focuses on how private education institutions respond to these changing preferences through marketing management transformation. Not just using digital media. This research will identify the unique challenges private education institutions face in Indonesia, such as national regulations, limited resources, and evolving public expectations.

This research aims to provide a holistic understanding of the changing preferences of education consumers and how private education institutions can transform their marketing strategies to remain relevant and competitive. Education consumers, including students and parents, now prefer institutions that offer high academic quality and services relevant to the needs of a globalized world, such as digital literacy, skills-based learning, and sustainability values. However, this dynamic presents significant challenges for private education institutions, especially in Indonesia, which compete locally and internationally with institutions of international standard. Most previous research has focused on individual aspects, such as the effectiveness of digital media or the importance of institutional reputation, but has been limited to a partial approach.

Through this research, a marketing strategy can be found that targets prospective students and builds consumer loyalty through a personalized, inclusive and value-based approach. Educational institutions can create a sustainable competitive advantage by integrating innovative approaches such as experiential marketing, the use of big data for personalization, and the delivery of socially relevant values. This research contributes to developing academic literature while providing practical solutions for private educational institutions facing global challenges. Through a more contextual and strategic approach, this research enriches the academic literature and offers practical guidance for private educational institutions to transform and remain relevant amidst global dynamics.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand the shifting preferences of education consumers and the transformation of marketing management at SMA Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi in the face of global competition. This approach was chosen because it can explore complex, in-depth, and contextual phenomena, thus providing comprehensive insights into effective marketing strategies amid changing consumer preferences (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019; Ramdhan, 2021). The primary data will be collected through in-depth interviews with institutional management, marketing personnel, parents, and students as the primary consumers of education. In addition to interviews, supporting data will be obtained through direct observation of the institution's marketing activities, such as digital campaigns, open houses, or educational exhibitions (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021).

Document analysis, such as annual reports, written marketing strategies, and statistical data on the number of registrants, will also strengthen the findings. Data triangulation techniques will be applied to ensure the validity and accuracy of the research results by comparing data from various sources. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns, key themes, and relationships between variables relevant to shifting consumer preferences and marketing transformation (Sari et al., 2022). The analysis results will focus on developing models or strategic recommendations that other private educational institutions can adopt. This research is expected to provide deep insights into how private educational institutions can transform their marketing strategies to answer the challenges of changing consumer preferences in the era of global competition (Ridlo, 2023).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Shifting Consumer Focus to Global Skills-Based Education

Education consumers, particularly students and parents, are showing an increasingly strong preference for institutions that offer global skills-based programs. It includes international curricula, digital literacy, development of critical thinking skills, and foreign language acquisition. This shift reflects society's need to prepare students for the challenges

of globalization, where adaptability and innovation are prioritized. This research focuses on the shifting preferences of education consumers and how private education institutions are transforming their marketing management strategies to remain relevant in the era of global competition. One of the key findings of this research is the increasing demand from consumers (both parents and students) for education that emphasizes not only academic quality but also global skills needed in an increasingly competitive world of work. It includes mastery of technology and foreign languages and critical thinking skills that can overcome global challenges.

Digitalization has been a significant catalyst in this change, with more and more educational institutions leveraging digital platforms to expand their marketing reach. Consumers now prefer institutions transparent with information and can provide a more personalized and relevant marketing experience through social media and interactive websites. On the other hand, while private education offers many advantages, the findings also point to issues related to the commercialization of education that create an access gap, making quality education more unaffordable for lower-middle-income groups. In order to further explore these findings, this study conducted interviews with several pertinent stakeholders, such as parents and managers of educational institutions. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Informant S, a parent of a student at a well-known private school.

"We chose this school because it not only focuses on the academic aspect, but also develops our child's skills to be ready to compete on a global level. The school offers intensive English and technology programs that make our child more prepared to face global challenges. The school's social media and website really help us as parents to better understand what is being taught and how our child's achievements are progressing. We feel closer to the school through these digital platforms."

Informant S's statement reflects the importance of a global skills-based approach to educational choice and the crucial role of digital media in building a more transparent and personalized relationship between educational institutions and consumers. On the other hand, the interview with Informant A, a private school manager, provided further insight into the challenges faced by educational institutions in terms of accessibility.

"We realize that the high cost of education is an obstacle for most families. We try to address this issue by providing scholarships and cross-subsidy programs, but still, cost remains a major barrier for many families who want quality education. While we focus on quality, we also strive to make education accessible to all."

This interview confirms that the challenge of the commercialization of education is one of the problems private education institutions face, with its impact on the gap in access to quality education. The interviews show that although private education institutions are trying to innovate in marketing and education quality, they still have to find solutions to make quality education accessible to more people, especially those from the middle to lower economic classes. The findings suggest that the shift in education consumers' focus on global skills is not just a trend but a response to the demands of an increasingly competitive globalization era. Today's education consumers demand institutions to provide quality academic education and practical skills relevant to the global job market. Digitalization is a significant catalyst, enabling institutions to deliver these values through interactive, transparent and personalized marketing. However, on the other hand, the challenge of commercialization of education creates an access gap that complicates efforts to provide quality education equitably.

This finding aligns with Muhibbin's *Hierarchy of Needs Theory* (2020), where global skills-based education can be seen as fulfilling individuals' self-actualization needs. Education consumers want to ensure that their children not only have the ability to survive in a changing world but also the ability to excel globally. In the context of marketing, this theory is also reinforced by Patricia et al.'s *Two-Way Communication Theory* (2019), which states that effective relationships between organizations (educational institutions) and audiences (consumers) require interactive communication. Digital platforms such as social media and school websites reflect this principle, enabling a more personalized and adaptive relationship to consumer needs. On the other hand, accessibility issues reflect the challenges of social *inequality* that can be explained through the *Theory of Educational Inequality* by (Allolayu, 2022), which states that access to quality education often depends on economic and cultural capital. Scholarships and cross-subsidies are strategic efforts to overcome these barriers, but more inclusive and sustainable policies are needed to make quality education accessible to all without discrimination.

The Role of Digitalization in Education Marketing

Digitalization is proving to play a crucial role in the transformation of private educational institutions' marketing strategies. Social media, interactive websites, and data-driven marketing are becoming key channels for building relationships with prospective students and parents. Institutions that actively use digital platforms to disseminate information, feature student testimonials, and promote transparency regarding curriculum and achievements have greater appeal. Digitalization also allows institutions to provide consumers with a more personalized and interactive marketing experience. Digitalization has become an important element in transforming education marketing, especially for private education institutions competing in the era of global competition. Digital technology allows institutions to reach a wider audience, deliver information more effectively, and build more personalized relationships with education consumers, both students and parents.

Social media, interactive websites, and other digital platforms have become strategic tools for promoting institutional excellence, such as international curricula, student achievements, and modern facilities. This research found that digitalization eases the marketing process and increases consumer trust through information transparency. Institutions that actively use digital media to showcase academic achievements, provide admission guidance, and offer virtual experiences (such as online school tours) are more desirable to consumers. On the other hand, challenges such as technology dependency and the digital divide are issues that need to be addressed, especially for institutions with limited resources to implement digital strategies optimally. Several people, including parents and school administrators, were interviewed to bolster these conclusions. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Informant L, a parent of a student who chose a digital-based institution:

"As a parent, I find the school's digital platform very helpful. Through social media and the school website, I can monitor activity schedules, academic information, and even see the achievements of other children who are an inspiration to my child. Features such as online consultation with teachers are also very convenient for us as a busy family."

In addition, *Informant R*, the head of the marketing department of a private school, delivered:

"We see that today's consumers prioritize easy access to information, and digitalization is the main solution. With social media, we can interact directly with prospective students and parents. Video school tours and webinars also help us reach

out to prospective students who live out of town. However, we still face challenges in providing consistent services due to limited budget for technology."

Based on the interviews above it confirms the important role of digitization in education marketing while also highlighting the challenges that need to be overcome. By effectively utilizing technology, educational institutions can increase their competitiveness, provide a better consumer experience, and remain relevant amidst the dynamics of the digital era. The findings confirm that digitalization has become a significant catalyst in transforming education marketing strategies. By utilizing social media, interactive websites, and data-driven marketing, private education institutions can create more personalized and interactive consumer relationships. Digitalization eases the information delivery process and increases consumer trust through transparency, such as presenting student achievements, virtual school tours, or direct communication with the school. However, challenges such as the digital divide and limited technology budgets are significant barriers, especially for institutions that want to expand their reach inclusively. These findings align with the *Interactive Communication Theory* by Dara et al. (2014), which states that communication technology can strengthen the relationship between an organization and its audience by creating more effective two-way interactions.

In education marketing, digital media allows institutions to listen to consumer feedback directly, understand their needs and offer relevant solutions. In addition, the relevance of these findings can be explained through the *Diffusion of Innovation Theory* by Mailin et al. (2022), which describes how innovations, such as the use of digital technologies, are adopted by organizations to meet changing consumer demands. Educational institutions that are quick to adopt digitalization tend to have greater appeal as they meet the needs of consumers who increasingly prioritize ease of access and transparency. However, the challenge of limited technology budgets reflects the importance of the Resource-Based View by Murtafiah and Ali (2023), which emphasizes that competitive advantage can only be achieved if an organization can use its unique resources optimally. Therefore, educational institutions must find innovative strategies, such as partnerships with third parties or government subsidies, to make digitization an inclusive and sustainable marketing tool.

Commercialization Challenges and Access Gaps

Although marketing transformation has increased the attractiveness of private education institutions, this study revealed that the issue of commercialization remains controversial. High costs are often a barrier for the lower middle class to access quality education. The findings highlight the importance of innovations such as scholarship programs, cross-subsidies or cooperation with the government to reduce the access gap. One important finding from this study is the challenge of the commercialization of education and its impact on the access gap to quality education, especially in private institutions. With the increasing preference for educational institutions that offer international curricula, modern facilities and innovative services, the private sector's education cost tends to become increasingly expensive. It creates significant barriers for lower-middle-income groups to access quality education.

Commercialization of education, while providing opportunities for private institutions to thrive, is also a controversial issue because it can widen social inequalities. Institutions that focus too much on financial gain tend to prioritize specific consumer segments. At the same time, people with economic limitations are forced to look for alternatives that may not be comparable in quality. However, some institutions have tried to bridge this gap by providing scholarship programs, cross-subsidizing, or collaborating with third parties such

as the government and non-profit organizations. Interviews with parents, institution managers, and education observers were done to bolster these conclusions. Informant D, a parent of a student, shared his experience:

"We want our children to get the best education, but the cost is very burdensome. Private schools have good facilities and a modern curriculum, but we have to rearrange our family finances to meet the cost of education. Scholarships do help, but not everyone can get access to them."

Meanwhile, Informant M, a private school manager, revealed the challenges from the institutional side:

"We realize that the cost of education in our school is not affordable for everyone. However, the operation and development of education programs require substantial investment. To reduce the gap, we provide scholarships for outstanding students and cross-subsidy programs to help students from families with economic limitations."

From the perspective of education observer Informant A, this issue points to the need for more inclusive policies:

"Commercialization of education should not come at the expense of accessibility. Collaboration between the government, private sector and communities is needed to create sustainable solutions, such as education subsidies or incentives for schools that provide inclusive services."

The interviews confirm that while private education institutions continue to develop innovative solutions, the access gap challenge still requires a more collaborative and sustainable approach to ensure that all levels of society can enjoy quality education. High tuition fees limit access for lower-middle-income earners, making quality education a luxury that only certain groups can afford. It shows that while education is a fundamental right, commercialization risks ignoring the principle of inclusivity. Educational institutions' efforts to bridge this gap, such as scholarships and cross-subsidies, are strategic, but their impact is still limited. Closer collaboration between the private sector, government and non-profit organizations is needed to create more inclusive policies. These findings can be analyzed through Asmara et al.'s *Social Justice Theory* (2020), which emphasizes the importance of equal access to essential resources, including education.

According to this theory, education policy should be designed to benefit the least advantaged groups. In this context, scholarships and cross-subsidies are forms of redistribution that try to reduce inequality but need to be expanded with more substantial public policy support. In addition, *Santoso's social capital theory* (2020) explains that quality education is a form of social capital that determines the future success of individuals. When access to education is limited, underprivileged groups lose the opportunity to build this capital, thus reinforcing the cycle of poverty. The importance of collaboration conveyed by Mr Andi can be supported by the *Educational Ecosystem Theory* (Shabillia & Santoso, 2023), which states that the ideal educational environment involves interactions between institutions, families and communities. In this case, government cooperation with educational institutions to provide subsidies or incentives is an integral part of a sustainable solution, ensuring quality education is accessible to all levels of society regardless of economic status.

4. CONCLUSION

This research highlights the changing dynamics of education consumer preferences, the role of digitalization in education marketing, and the challenges of access gaps due to

commercialization. The shift in consumer focus to global skills-based education reflects a response to the increasingly competitive demands of globalization. Private education institutions are challenged to provide international curricula, digital literacy, and critical thinking skills to meet these needs. Digitalization has been a significant catalyst in the transformation of education marketing. Social media, interactive websites, and data-driven marketing allow institutions to build more personalized and transparent consumer relationships. However, the digital divide and resource constraints mean that not all institutions can optimally utilize these technologies.

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