

## Sustaining Competitiveness: Promotional Mix Strategies in High-Performing Primary Schools Facing Demographic Shift

Eva Diana <sup>a.1,\*</sup>, Ahmad Rifandi <sup>b.2</sup>

<sup>\*ab</sup> Universitas Islam Nusantara 1 & 2, Indonesia 1 & 2.

<sup>\*1</sup> [eva.diana0310@gmail.com](mailto:eva.diana0310@gmail.com); <sup>\*2</sup> [rifandi.ahmad@gmail.com](mailto:rifandi.ahmad@gmail.com)

<sup>\*</sup>Correspondent Author

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### ABSTRACT

Declining student populations and increasing competition between public and private schools have required primary schools to adopt more strategic and structured marketing approaches. This qualitative multiple-case study analyzes how two high-performing primary schools in Margahayu District SD IT Anni'mah and SD Mathlaul Anwar design and implement promotion mix strategies within the New Student Admission System (SPMB). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and were examined using Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis framework. The findings reveal that the effectiveness of promotional strategies is closely linked to each school's ability to integrate the elements of the marketing mix (7P). Program differentiation, transparent pricing, accessible school facilities, and a supportive physical environment significantly shape parental perceptions and enrollment decisions. A combination of online and offline promotional channels, including trial classes and targeted community outreach, proved effective in maintaining public interest. The professionalism of staff, clarity of communication, and well-organized administrative procedures further strengthened parent trust and contributed to a positive school image. Despite these strengths, both schools face challenges related to infrastructure limitations, digital content management, and staff development. However, their adaptive responses such as restructuring SPMB teams, improving digital materials, enhancing service clarity, and investing in teacher capacity-building demonstrate strong organizational resilience. This study contributes to the limited body of literature on educational marketing in primary schools by linking promotion mix implementation to demographic shifts and competitive pressures. It offers a structured understanding of how strategic, adaptive, and holistic promotional efforts enable high-performing schools to sustain their preferred status in an evolving educational landscape.

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## Introduction

### 1 Background

The quality of an educational institution is not only determined by the learning outcomes achieved by students but also by various integrated components (Purba & Saragih, 2023; Purwadhi, 2019). Schools considered high-quality generally manage to selectively screen student intake, provide adequate facilities, and have competent teaching and non-teaching staff who meet applicable certification standards (Dalyono & Agustina, 2016; Jabar & Susilo, 2021). A safe, orderly, and conducive learning environment is also an important part of assessing school quality (Rahmi, 2019). In recent years, parental preferences for schools have increasingly changed. Parents are now more selective and do not only consider geographical proximity but also evaluate the quality of services, flagship programs, and character building offered by schools (Borghans et al., 2014; Restarie et al., 2024). This shift in preference reinforces the phenomenon of the emergence of the term "favorite school," which refers to schools perceived as superior and becoming the primary choice for the community, even though all public schools receive relatively similar facility support (Arlinwibowo et al., 2024; Jannah et al., 2020; Restarie et al., 2024). Thus, the status as a favorite school is not formed instantly but arises from consistent development strategies and quality improvement over a long period (Ratnasari & Suradika, 2020; Shobirin et al., 2023).

An interesting phenomenon occurred in Margahayu District, Bandung Regency, where the number of public elementary schools decreased significantly from 36 units in 2022 to 27 units in 2024. This decline was influenced by school mergers and closures due to the low number of students (Wijayanti et al., 2023). In addition to school management policy factors, the decrease in student numbers was also influenced by a decline in birth rates occurring at both national and regional levels, thus shrinking the student market (Lacey, 1988; Syarifudin, 2020). Nevertheless, private elementary schools remained stable at 8 units, and some private schools especially integrated Islamic schools were even able to maintain public interest (Marwazi & Abid, 2021). This condition indicates that a school's success does not solely depend on the number of schools in its vicinity but on the institution's capacity to adapt to increasingly fierce competition (Fauziah & Khakimatusodiqoh, 2022; Kholik & Laeli, 2020). Competition among public schools, regular private schools, and integrated Islamic-based schools is intensifying, so schools that do not innovate in services and management risk losing prospective students (Anisa, 2022).

As an educational service institution, schools are required to maintain service quality and ensure that the programs offered provide added value for students (Fauziah & Khakimatusodiqoh, 2022). If services are inadequate or irrelevant to community needs, schools risk losing the interest of prospective students, especially given the declining number of school-aged children (Fauziah & Khakimatusodiqoh, 2022). To remain competitive, schools need clear differentiation, such as flagship programs, strong character building, academic achievement, or more modern facilities (Herawati et al., 2022). This differentiation becomes a crucial foundation in developing school marketing strategies. In the digital era, social media plays an important role in shaping a school's image, as parents of the current generation rely on digital information as a basis for decision-making (Muhsin & Muadin, 2023). Schools that do not maximize digital promotion tend to lose out in competition (Muhsin & Muadin, 2023). Therefore, educational marketing strategies especially the promotional mix in the New Student Admission System become a key instrument not only for attracting new students but also for maintaining the school's sustainability and reputation (Hasanah et al., 2021).

Observing these dynamics, it is important to research how leading elementary schools in Margahayu District formulate and implement effective promotional strategies in the new student admission process. This research describes not only the promotional stages undertaken but also how school differentiation and the utilization of digital media strengthen the success of these strategies. Furthermore, studies on educational marketing are still rarely conducted at the elementary school level, especially in the context of regions experiencing a decline in the number of schools and students. Therefore, this research makes a significant contribution to filling this literature gap, while also offering relevant marketing strategy recommendations for elementary schools in areas facing demographic and competitive challenges.

## **2 Previous Literature Review**

Various studies have examined strategies for improving school quality and education marketing, which are important foundations for understanding the dynamics of inter-school competition. Nurhasanah et al. (2024) affirm that innovation in the education marketing mix can increase the interest of new students, especially through strengthening aspects of promotion, services, and school differentiation. This research indicates that schools capable of integrating marketing mix strategies will more easily attract public attention. Meanwhile, Malik & Saputra (2024) researched educational marketing management strategies in public primary schools. They found that school marketing strategies are strongly influenced by the school's ability to build public communication and strengthen parental trust through the quality of educational services. These findings align with the research by Nurillah et al. (2024) which explains that market segmentation, school positioning, and appropriate promotional strategies play a significant role in enhancing the school's image in the eyes of the community. Other research by Sari et al. (2023) focused on the promotion of New Student Admissions in primary schools. The results show that systematic promotion, such as visits to kindergartens/RA, publication of flagship programs, and utilization of print and digital media, are important factors in increasing the number of applicants at primary schools. The same was affirmed by Rahmawati et al. (2024) who found that planned and sustainable promotional strategies have a direct influence on increasing the number of new students at the madrasah tsanawiyah level. On the other hand, Margareta et al. (2018) reviewed school marketing strategies from the Delta Model perspective and found that program differentiation, service excellence, and strengthening relationships with the community are elements that contribute significantly to increasing the interest of prospective students. This research reinforces the view that school identity and image are formed through a combination of academic quality, services, and the strength of public communication. Although much research on education marketing has been conducted, most of its focus is still on the secondary or madrasah levels. Studies specifically discussing promotional mix strategies in primary schools, especially in the context of competition between public and private schools and the phenomenon of declining student numbers, are still relatively limited. This indicates room for new research to fill this gap, particularly in examining how primary schools can utilize promotional mix strategies to maintain their image and status as favorite schools amidst demographic changes and dynamic community needs.

Although previous studies have discussed various aspects of educational marketing strategies, several important gaps remain unaddressed. First, most research on educational marketing focuses on secondary or religious schools (as seen in studies by Salma Nurillah et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2024), leaving limited exploration of promotional mixes in primary schools. Second, studies that examine admission promotion strategies at the elementary level (such as Ria Sari et al., 2023) generally describe the promotional activities without linking them to demographic shifts, particularly the decline in the number of schools and students occurring in several regions, including Margahayu District.

Third, previous research has not specifically investigated how high-performing primary schools respond to increasing competition between public and private institutions in situations where student numbers tend to decline. In fact, this competitive environment significantly influences how schools design and implement marketing strategies to maintain their status as a preferred institution. Fourth, there is a lack of research focusing on how promotional mixes are carried out in a structured and phased manner as part of the New Student Admission System (SPMB) to sustain school competitiveness.

These gaps indicate the need for a study that comprehensively examines the implementation of promotional mix strategies in high-performing primary schools while considering local demographic dynamics and competition among schools. Therefore, this research aims to fill critical voids in the literature related to educational marketing practices at the primary school level.

This research offers several novelties compared to previous studies. First, it specifically examines the promotional mix strategies applied in high-performing primary schools, a level of education that has received relatively little attention in educational marketing literature, especially in the context of increasing competition between public and private schools. Second, this study integrates promotional mix analysis with the demographic phenomenon of declining numbers of schools and students in Margahayu District. This provides a new perspective on how demographic factors shape the planning and implementation of promotional strategies. Such an approach is rarely found in earlier research, which tends to discuss promotional strategies broadly without considering demographic shifts. Third, this research emphasizes how the New Student Admission System (SPMB) is carried out in layered and sequential stages, covering communication strategies, publication activities, and service differentiation to maintain the school's reputation as a preferred institution. The structured analysis of these promotional stages becomes a new contribution to the literature on educational marketing. Fourth, the study presents grounded insights into promotional practices in high-performing primary schools that successfully maintain their reputation despite regional declines in student populations. This fills a knowledge gap on how preferred schools ensure their sustainability amid environmental shifts. With these four points of novelty, the research provides meaningful contributions to the development of educational marketing theory, particularly in the context of primary schools and local demographic dynamics.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the management of the promotional mix in student admission (PPDB) as a strategy to maintain the status of outstanding schools. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables the researcher to explore phenomena in their natural context without manipulating conditions or variables. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize that qualitative research is ideal for understanding complex and dynamic social realities through the direct involvement of the researcher as the primary instrument.

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative design to present a systematic and factual portrayal of the strategies and practices used in promoting PPDB. As stated by Yuliani (2018), descriptive qualitative research is used in social phenomenology to describe phenomena as they naturally occur. This design is also aligned with Creswell and Poth's (2018) assertion that qualitative descriptive studies aim to understand specific practices or social processes through rich, field-based data.

The study was conducted at SD Islam Terpadu Anni'mah and SD Mathlaul Anwar in Bandung Regency, both selected through purposive sampling due to their strong reputations for competitiveness in PPDB and active implementation of promotional strategies. Informants were chosen based on their involvement and knowledge regarding PPDB management, including the principal, vice principal, public relations or student affairs personnel, PPDB committee members, and other relevant stakeholders. This selection aligns with Patton's (2015) guideline on purposive sampling to obtain "information-rich cases."

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and document analysis. The interview guide was developed based on Kotler and Keller's (2016) services marketing mix model (7P), which includes product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Open-ended questions were used to explore planning, implementation, evaluation, challenges, and solutions related to promotional strategies in PPDB. Observations were conducted to examine promotional practices, staff interactions, school facilities, and the use of promotional media, while documentation included PPDB brochures, activity reports, social media content, and internal school records. These techniques were implemented to ensure methodological triangulation as recommended by Denzin (2017).

Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. This process occurred continuously during data collection until saturation was achieved. Data reduction was carried out by categorizing information according to the 7P elements, data presentation was organized through thematic narratives and tables, and conclusions were verified through triangulation and member checking with informants.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied the four criteria introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These were addressed through source and method triangulation, member checking, a comprehensive audit trail, and rich contextual descriptions following the recommendations of Merriam and Tisdell (2016), ensuring that the research findings can be understood and applied in similar contexts.

## Result

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the implementation of the promotion mix for New Student Admissions (PPDB/SPMB) at SD IT Anni'mah and SD Mathlaul Anwar. The results are organized into four major components: planning, organizing, implementation–evaluation, and constraints–solutions.

### 1 Planning of the Promotion Mix (7P)

#### 1.1 SD IT Anni'mah

SD IT Anni'mah meticulously designs its promotion planning using the 7P framework to achieve a targeted enrollment capacity of 120 students. Its product offering is robust, featuring flagship programs such as Qur'an tahsin and tahfiz using the UMMI method, the Turjuman Program, Tuntas Calis, AKM Intensive Program, and Smart Class, complemented by additional services like psychological consultations and regular Islamic character-building activities. The school's price structure targets the middle-upper segment, offering financial flexibility through installment options, a 10% sibling discount, and early-bird incentives, all communicated with an emphasis on transparency. Physically, the school enhances its image through well-maintained facilities, including school buildings, a mosque, science and computer laboratories, a library, health room, playground, hall, and technology-supported classrooms. For promotion, SD IT Anni'mah employs a hybrid strategy that combines digital platforms with offline

activities such as open houses, trial classes, and visits to partner kindergartens. The "people" aspect is critical, with teachers and staff serving as key representatives of school quality; the admission committee receives training on service excellence, and the principal acts as the primary spokesperson to parents. The admission process is structured for simplicity and clarity, encompassing form submission, administrative screening, trial classes, and announcements, with information disseminated through WhatsApp groups and the official school website. Finally, physical evidence is carefully managed through visual documentation, including photos and videos, to showcase learning facilities and project a trustworthy and professional impression.

## 1.2 SD Mathlaul Anwar

At SD Mathlaul Anwar, promotion planning centers on product differentiation and strengthening community networks. The school offers two main programs: a Regular Program and a Full Day Program featuring an intensive tahfiz curriculum targeting three juz, providing parents with flexible options. Fees are adjusted based on the chosen program, and scholarships are available in the form of SPP waivers for outstanding students. Strategically located in Margahayu, the school benefits from its proximity to residential areas, with most students originating from surrounding communities. Promotional strategies heavily rely on social media and strong word-of-mouth recommendations; the school regularly publishes documentation of student activities, such as tasmi' and religious gatherings, to foster parental pride. In terms of "people," teachers and staff receive ongoing training in pedagogy, tahfiz management, and special-needs handling, while the principal emphasizes daily moral habituation. The registration process is facilitated via WhatsApp and in-person visits, followed by interviews, student observation, and uniform measurement, with additional assessments provided for prospective inclusive students. The school's physical evidence includes essential facilities like a mosque, sports field, computer laboratory, library, and CCTV, with a strong prioritization of cleanliness and comfort.

## 2 Organization of the Promotion Team

- SD IT Anni'mah: A special SPMB committee is formed with a clear organizational structure, led by a chairperson and consisting of teachers, administrative staff, and parent representatives. Duties are divided into social media management, communication services, and administrative tasks. Alumni are involved as informal promotional ambassadors.
- SD Mathlaul Anwar: The committee includes the principal, classroom teachers, administrative staff, and operators. Responsibilities are assigned based on functional roles, with the principal serving as the main person in charge.

## 3 Implementation and Evaluation of the Promotion Mix

Table 1. Summary of the Implementation and Evaluation of the Promotion Mix (7P)

7P Aspect	SD IT Anni'mah	SD Mathlaul Anwar
Promotion	Hybrid strategy via digital platforms and trial classes. High conversion: 165 trial participants → 145 registrants. Evaluation: Word of mouth is the most effective (70%).	Hybrid strategy with strong emphasis on word of mouth. Survey: 84% received information from social media, 61% from brochures/banners. Social media is the primary channel.
Product	90% of parents chose the school because of flagship programs (Tahfiz, Calis, AKM, Islamic character).	Strength in product differentiation: regular vs. full day with tahfiz curriculum.

7P Aspect	SD IT Anni'mah	SD Mathlaul Anwar
Price	92.5% of parents consider the fees appropriate. Challenges: price stability and unexpected add-on costs.	Scholarships available; main challenge lies in lack of detailed cost transparency.
Place	Strategic location but with challenges related to narrow access roads and limited parking area.	Easily accessible; issues with limited parking space and waiting areas.
People	73% rate committee responsiveness as good; 92% satisfied with information provided.	Teachers are professional; challenges arise in inclusive education services.
Process	Most parents find the process easy; 50% experienced no significant obstacles.	Challenges in administrative flow and insufficient clarity of fee-related information.
Physical Evidence	Facilities received positive evaluations from parents.	Improvements needed in waiting area and parking facilities.

### 3.1 Summary of Findings

- SD IT Anni'mah demonstrates a highly effective promotion strategy. The combination of strong programs, trial-class activities, and responsive service results in excellent enrollment conversion. Primary challenges relate to infrastructure particularly parking and access roads as well as fee stability.
- SD Mathlaul Anwar excels in product differentiation and community-based promotion. However, it faces notable challenges in cost transparency, certain physical facilities, and teacher readiness for inclusive education

## 4 Constraints and Solutions

### 4.1 Constraints

#### a. SD IT Anni'mah

SD IT Anni'mah faces several constraints. Planning is hindered by limited manpower, which affects the preparation and timely dissemination of high-quality promotional materials. Promotion efforts are challenged by inconsistent social media content and insufficient content variety, potentially diluting the school's online presence and engagement. Parental concerns frequently arise due to unexpected fee adjustments and additional costs not initially disclosed. A limited number of teachers reduces their involvement in direct promotional activities, impacting personalized outreach. Some facilities also require upgrades to meet modern standards, constituting a critical physical evidence constraint. Furthermore, the online payment system is perceived as confusing by some parents, presenting a significant process-related issue that can deter registration.

#### b. SD Mathlaul Anwar

SD Mathlaul Anwar also experiences specific constraints. In terms of product, there is insufficient teacher capacity in handling students with special needs, limiting the school's inclusive education offerings. Regarding price and process, the school lacks detailed fee information, leading to parental uncertainty, and the administrative flow is not standardized, causing inefficiencies and potential frustration. Place and physical evidence issues include limited parking and waiting areas, which detract from the visitor experience, alongside the need for improvement in other facilities to enhance overall appeal. Promotion strategies are impacted because the website and social media are not fully optimized, leading to missed opportunities for engagement and reach. Lastly, from a people perspective, teachers require additional specialized training in inclusive education to adequately support all students.

## 4.2 Solutions

### a. SD IT Anni'mah

To comprehensively address its constraints, SD IT Anni'mah plans to reorganize task distribution and increase the workforce within its promotion team, ensuring a more robust and consistent output of promotional materials. Furthermore, digital content will be significantly enhanced by involving tech-savvy younger staff or external partners to create dynamic and varied social media campaigns. The school also aims to strengthen financial transparency through clear communication and expand flexible payment options to effectively address parental concerns regarding costs. Communication training will be provided to staff to improve interactions, and a dedicated public relations unit will be established to professionalize outreach efforts. Regarding facilities, phased renovations of key areas will be conducted alongside efforts to improve environmental cleanliness, directly enhancing the school's physical evidence. Finally, clearer registration guides will be prepared, and the online admission system will be refined to ensure a user-friendly and transparent process.

### b. SD Mathlaul Anwar

SD Mathlaul Anwar intends to offer specialized teacher training focused on inclusive education, thereby strengthening its capacity to support diverse learners and reinforce its intensive tahfiz curriculum to further improve its unique product quality. To enhance transparency and streamline processes, the school plans to publish detailed, accessible fee brochures and digitize the entire admission process, reducing administrative bottlenecks and improving clarity for parents. Critical improvements will also be made to physical infrastructure, specifically by enhancing parking areas and waiting rooms to create a more welcoming environment. A dedicated digital-content team will be formed to optimize promotion strategies through professional website management and engaging social media campaigns. Lastly, the school will organize continuous professional development workshops for teachers, particularly to support their readiness and expertise in inclusive education, reinforcing the quality of its "people" aspect

## Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that both SD IT Anni'mah and SD Mathlaul Anwar implement promotional mix strategies that align with the characteristics of high-performing primary schools, critically attempting to sustain competitiveness in a changing demographic landscape. The discussion below synthesizes these findings with relevant literature, meticulously addressing all elements of the promotional mix, organizational strategies, challenges, and proposed solutions, thereby offering a comprehensive analysis of their strategic positioning.

### 1 The Role of Program Differentiation in Strengthening School Attractiveness

Both schools place a strong, strategic emphasis on program differentiation as a key promotional asset, recognizing its critical role in attracting and retaining students. SD IT Anni'mah distinctly focuses on Qur'anic literacy, character education, and AKM preparation, while SD Mathlaul Anwar prominently highlights its dual program and rigorously structured tahfiz curriculum. These differentiation efforts are central to SD IT Anni'mah's highly effective promotion strategy and SD Mathlaul Anwar's excellence in product differentiation and community-based promotion, which consistently result in excellent enrollment conversion for the former. These findings robustly align with Nurhasanah et al., who compellingly argue that

sustained innovation in school programs is not merely advantageous but essential for cultivating public interest and securing a competitive position in an evolving educational landscape. Similarly, Margareta et al. underscore that differentiation is a core, indispensable factor in shaping a school's identity and strengthening community trust. The consistently high percentage of parents at both schools who explicitly select the institution due to its program advantages unequivocally confirms that product innovation is the primary determinant of school choice in the local context, especially in areas acutely affected by declining school-age populations.

## **2 Transparency and Perceived Fairness in Pricing**

SD IT Anni'mah is consistently perceived as having clear and reasonable costs, with an impressive 92.5% of parents rating the price positively. However, persistent concerns about the stability of fees highlight a subtle yet significant vulnerability, as unexpected fee adjustments and additional costs not initially disclosed frequently arise. In stark contrast, SD Mathlaul Anwar profoundly struggles with transparency and clarity of its fee structure, leading to considerable parental uncertainty and a lack of detailed fee information. These findings strongly support the conclusion by Malik & Saputra that parental trust is intricately influenced by how clearly schools communicate costs and financial policies. Critically, poor transparency can severely undermine the effectiveness of even highly attractive academic programs, fundamentally eroding promotional efforts and parent confidence. To address these, SD IT Anni'mah aims to strengthen financial transparency through clear communication and expand flexible payment options, while SD Mathlaul Anwar plans to publish detailed, accessible fee brochures. The notable contrast between the two schools suggests that price clarity is not only a crucial economic factor but also a powerful promotional variable, directly reinforcing parents' perceptions of trustworthiness and reliability.

## **3 School Location and Physical Environment**

Although both schools are geographically situated in accessible areas, significant infrastructural constraints such as limited parking, narrow access roads, and a lack of adequate waiting areas represent substantial operational and promotional challenges. For SD IT Anni'mah, facilities require upgrades to meet modern standards, constituting a critical physical evidence constraint. SD Mathlaul Anwar faces similar issues with limited parking and waiting areas which detract from the visitor experience, alongside the need for improvement in other facilities to enhance overall appeal. Consistent with Margareta et al., physical evidence and the quality of the environmental support undeniably influence parental evaluation of overall school quality. While academic excellence initially attracts interest, the physical conditions profoundly shape parental comfort, daily convenience, and long-term satisfaction, thereby directly impacting the school's reputation and appeal. To mitigate these, SD IT Anni'mah will conduct phased renovations of key areas and improve environmental cleanliness, while SD Mathlaul Anwar will enhance parking areas and waiting rooms. This finding significantly expands previous studies by demonstrating that even high-performing primary schools encounter environmental constraints that can materially limit the full potential and efficacy of their promotional strategies.

## **4 Promotional Channels and Their Effectiveness**

Both schools strategically adopt hybrid promotional approaches, combining impactful digital media campaigns with direct, personalized activities. SD IT Anni'mah consistently demonstrates a strong conversion rate from its meticulously organized trial classes, contributing to its highly effective promotion strategy. However, promotion efforts are

challenged by inconsistent social media content and insufficient content variety, potentially diluting its online presence. SD Mathloul Anwar heavily relies on the pervasive influence of word of mouth within the community and excels in community-based promotion. Yet, its website and social media are not fully optimized, leading to missed opportunities for engagement and reach. These results are highly consistent with Ria Sari et al., who emphasize the critical significance of systematic promotion utilizing diverse channels, and Rahmawati et al., who note that ongoing and structured promotional efforts directly impact student admissions. The enduring dominance of word-of-mouth further aligns with Salma Nurillah et al., who highlight the profound importance of community perception and strategic school positioning in shaping a compelling school image. To improve, SD IT Anni'mah plans to enhance digital content by involving tech-savvy staff or external partners, while SD Mathloul Anwar will form a dedicated digital-content team to optimize strategies through professional website management and engaging social media campaigns. A particularly notable finding is that trial classes serve as an exceptionally effective conversion tool, demonstrating an additional, powerful layer of promotional influence that earlier research did not fully explore, providing a novel insight into recruitment strategies.

## **5 Quality of Human Resources as a Determinant of Trust**

Teacher professionalism, responsive communication, and strong school leadership play central and indispensable roles in shaping parental satisfaction and cultivating a positive school image. SD IT Anni'mah consistently shows stronger performance in this crucial area, whereas SD Mathloul Anwar faces distinct challenges, particularly in effectively handling inclusive students and ensuring comprehensive support, largely due to insufficient teacher capacity in handling students with special needs and the need for additional specialized training. The findings emphatically reinforce the argument by Malik & Saputra that effective communication and a service-oriented approach profoundly influence parental trust and overall school image. They also strongly confirm Margareta et al.'s view that service excellence is a fundamental pillar of school competitiveness. To address its constraints, SD Mathloul Anwar intends to offer specialized teacher training focused on inclusive education. Thus, people-centered promotional strength manifested through exemplary teacher behavior, administrative responsiveness, and clear leadership communication is a major and strategic contributor to a school's enduring reputation and appeal.

## **6 Administrative and Admission Processes**

Both schools demonstrate robust, structured SPMB procedures; however, SD Mathloul Anwar continues to struggle with clarity regarding fees and administrative flow, which is not standardized, causing inefficiencies and potential frustration for prospective parents. Conversely, SD IT Anni'mah's digital-based communication, primarily through WhatsApp groups, coupled with clear, step-by-step procedures, significantly enhances parental satisfaction and reduces ambiguity, despite some parents perceiving its online payment system as confusing. These findings provide compelling empirical support for Rahmawati et al., who found that systematic and continuous processes in student admissions significantly contribute to increased enrollment. To resolve these issues, SD IT Anni'mah will prepare clearer registration guides and refine its online admission system, while SD Mathloul Anwar plans to digitize the entire admission process. This study extends earlier research by clearly showing that process quality not only influences satisfaction but also intrinsically acts as a powerful promotional strategy. A clear, efficient, and predictable admission flow instills confidence in parents and substantially reduces uncertainty, thereby becoming a competitive advantage.

## 7 Organizational Capacity and Internal Coordination

The presence of a highly structured and dedicated SPMB team at SD IT Anni'mah demonstrates a superior level of organizational readiness and strategic planning compared to SD Mathlul Anwar, where coordination appears simpler and more centralized, potentially limiting agility. SD IT Anni'mah's planning is hindered by limited manpower, which affects the preparation and timely dissemination of high-quality promotional materials. This critical organizational difference strongly supports Nurhasanah et al., who indicated that the internal ability to effectively design and execute promotional activities directly impacts school visibility and overall attractiveness. It also aligns perfectly with Malik & Saputra, who emphasize internal communication as an essential component of effective school marketing, driving cohesive and impactful outreach. To address its manpower limitation, SD IT Anni'mah plans to reorganize task distribution and increase the workforce within its promotion team.

## 8 Challenges and Their Strategic Responses

Each identified challenge such as limitations in physical facilities, the complexities of digital content management, the imperative for administrative clarity, and the critical need for human resource capacity development directly impacts the effectiveness and reach of the promotional mix. Both schools face infrastructure challenges, particularly parking and access roads, and issues with fee stability and cost transparency. SD IT Anni'mah grapples with limited manpower and inconsistent social media content, while SD Mathlul Anwar faces insufficient teacher capacity for inclusive education and unoptimized digital presence. By proposing strategic and adaptive solutions such as actively engaging digital-literate teachers, significantly improving transparency of costs, making targeted investments in facility upgrades, strengthening comprehensive teacher training, and optimizing coordinated promotion teams, both schools illustrate proactive, adaptive strategies. For instance, SD IT Anni'mah will reorganize tasks, enhance digital content, strengthen financial transparency, conduct phased renovations, and refine its online system. Similarly, SD Mathlul Anwar will implement specialized teacher training, publish detailed fee brochures, digitize admissions, enhance physical infrastructure, and form a dedicated digital content team. These responses are highly consistent with findings from Margareta et al. on the paramount importance of continuous improvement in school services for sustained success and competitiveness.

## 9 Contribution of the Study in Relation to Previous Research

This study makes distinct and valuable contributions to previous literature in three significant ways. Firstly, it provides robust empirical evidence specifically from primary schools a crucial educational level that remains insufficiently explored in prior marketing research. Secondly, it uniquely integrates promotional mix analysis with the dynamic context of demographic changes, a critical dimension that earlier studies often overlooked. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it meticulously demonstrates a layered and sequential implementation of the SPMB promotional cycle, thereby significantly expanding the theoretical discussion on structured educational marketing and offering a more nuanced understanding of how schools attract and enroll students in competitive environments.

## Conclusion

This study looked closely at how two high-performing primary schools, SD IT Anni'mah and SD Mathlul Anwar in Margahayu District, used promotional strategies to attract new students. The results show that both schools strategically used different promotional tools to stay competitive in a changing demographic environment where student numbers are

decreasing. A key finding is that offering distinct programs is crucial for attracting potential students, with both schools using their unique academic and character-building programs to their advantage. Clear and fair pricing is essential for building parent trust; SD IT Anni'mah communicates costs clearly, unlike SD Mathlul Anwar, which struggles with fee transparency. The school's physical environment and ease of access, including facilities, parking, and roads, greatly affect how parents view the school and their overall satisfaction, showing that good infrastructure is vital to a school's attractiveness. Both schools effectively use a mix of online and offline promotional methods; for instance, trial classes were particularly effective for SD IT Anni'mah in converting interest into enrollment. The quality of staff, including professional teachers, clear communication, and strong leadership, largely determines parent trust and a positive school image. Moreover, efficient and clear administrative and admission processes are seen as strong promotional tools that build parent confidence and reduce uncertainty. The study also emphasized how crucial organizational capacity and internal coordination are, with a well-organized New Student Admission System team playing a significant role in successful promotional activities. Despite their achievements, both schools face challenges with facilities, managing digital content, administrative clarity, and staff development. However, their quick and flexible responses like reorganizing duties, improving digital content, making finances clearer, upgrading facilities, and offering ongoing teacher training show their dedication to always getting better and staying competitive. This research adds significantly to existing literature by providing strong evidence specifically from primary schools, an educational level often overlooked in marketing studies. It uniquely combines the analysis of promotional strategies with the important context of demographic changes, offering a new way to understand how these factors influence strategic planning. Finally, the study thoroughly details the step-by-step process of the New Student Admission System's promotional cycle, improving our theoretical understanding of structured educational marketing in competitive environments. Ultimately, effective, adaptable, and complete marketing strategies are essential for primary schools aiming to maintain their reputation and appeal in an evolving educational landscape.

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