



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Strategic Marketing Approaches Leveraging the 7P Marketing Mix Framework to Overcome Sales Challenges and Enhance Purchase Intention for IELTS Programs at Athena English Course

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## Abstract

Athena English Course, an English course institution in Bandung, faces challenges in increasing the number of registrants, especially in online IELTS preparation classes. This study aims to analyze the influence of the 7P marketing mix elements-Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence-on customer purchase intention in choosing an online IELTS preparation course. The research approach used is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, with data collection through respondent surveys. The data obtained were analyzed using SmartPLS to evaluate the significance of the relationship between variables. The results showed that Price, Promotion, Product, and People elements have a positive influence on customer purchase intention, while Place, Process, and Physical Evidence elements have a weaker or insignificant impact. The findings provide insights for English course providers in designing more effective marketing strategies to attract more students and increase sustainable business growth. Based on the research results, Athena English Course can optimize 3 main strategies, namely first, focusing on new market segmentation that is more specific and has minimal competitors, second, utilizing social media marketing promotions, and third, readjusting the price of the products offered to compete with competitors and reach a wider market. With a more targeted approach, Athena English Course has the potential to increase its revenue and competitiveness in the English language education industry in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Marketing Mix 7P, Purchase Intention, SWOT, IELTS Course, SmartPLS, Education Marketing.

## Introduction

English, as an international language, plays a crucial role in global communication, education, and career development. Proficiency in English can open various opportunities, from access to quality education, employment in multinational companies, to enhancing individual competitiveness in the global job market. In Indonesia, the need for English proficiency is increasing along with the growth of the digital industry, foreign investments, and study abroad opportunities. However, despite the growing awareness of the importance of English, the level of English proficiency in Indonesia remains relatively low compared to neighboring countries in Southeast Asia.

According to the 2023 English Proficiency Index (EPI) report released by Education First (EF), Indonesia ranks 79th out of 113 countries, with a score of 469, which falls into the low proficiency category (EF EPI, 2023). This position indicates that the English language skills of Indonesians still need to be improved to become more competitive globally. In the regional context, Indonesia also lags behind countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, which fall into the high to very high proficiency categories. This condition highlights a gap in English proficiency that could impact Indonesia's human resource competitiveness in various sectors, including education and the workforce. Nevertheless, the interest of Indonesians in learning English continues to increase. According to Duolingo (2023), the number of users of

the application in Indonesia has increased sixfold since 2020, making Indonesia the second-largest market in Southeast Asia after Vietnam (Xiang, 2023). This trend reflects that more individuals are becoming aware of the importance of English as a skill that can support their future. Additionally, the 2022 EF EPI report shows that Bandung ranks as the fourth city with the highest level of English proficiency in Indonesia. This ranking indicates that the people of Bandung have a higher awareness of the importance of English compared to some other cities in Indonesia (EF EPI, 2022).

With the increasing demand for English courses, the English course industry in Bandung has grown rapidly. According to Google Maps data (2024), there are more than 20 active English course institutions in the city, offering various learning programs, including intensive courses, TOEFL and IELTS classes, and general conversation courses. The intense competition in this industry requires each course provider to have an effective marketing strategy and a competitive advantage in terms of teaching methods, pricing, and a unique learning experience. Institutions that can adapt to market needs and implement innovative teaching methods will have a greater chance of attracting students and ensuring the sustainability of their business. In this context, Athena English Course, as one of the English course providers in Bandung, faces challenges in increasing the number of registrants, particularly for its online IELTS preparation class. Given the high level of competition, Athena English Course needs to develop a more effective marketing strategy and strengthen differentiation in its learning programs to attract more students and enhance its competitiveness in Indonesia's English course industry.

## Business Issue

Athena English Course is experiencing a decline and lack of sales in its online IELTS preparation classes. One of the main causes is the insufficient utilization of promotional media, both online and offline, leading to low brand awareness and limited

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market reach. Digital marketing, which should be the primary tool for boosting sales, has not been fully optimized in terms of social media strategy, content, advertising, or marketing budget allocation. Additionally, IELTS classes, being the most expensive product, lack sufficient appeal in the market, likely due to ineffective marketing strategies amid intense competition. As a result, IELTS remains in a low-awareness position, requiring innovative marketing strategies to enhance competitiveness and drive sales growth. Athena English Course recognizes the need for a strategic marketing shift to compete more effectively and achieve better business growth.

## Literature Review

### *Marketing Mix 7P*

Kotler and Armstrong define the marketing mix as a set of marketing tools that can be used to achieve marketing objectives and target markets (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). The marketing mix in educational services is a component of educational institutions that can be controlled by the foundation to communicate with parents and is used to ensure that parents and students feel satisfied (Permatasari & Ashriana, 2019).

According to Kotler and Keller, services have four distinct characteristics that significantly influence the planning of marketing programs. First, services are intangible, unlike physical products that can be seen, felt, touched, heard, or smelled before being purchased. Second, services are inseparable, while physical products can be produced, stored in inventory, distributed through various intermediaries, and consumed separately. Third, services are variable, as their quality depends on who provides them, when and where they are provided, and for whom they are intended, making services highly variable. Fourth, services are perishable, meaning they cannot be stored, leading to challenges when demand for services fluctuates (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

A product is anything that can be offered to the market to satisfy a need or want, including physical goods, services, experiences, locations, events, properties, organizations, information, and ideas (Kotler, 2012). According to Kotler, a service product is anything that producers can offer to be discovered, sought, acquired, bought, used, or consumed by the market as a means of fulfilling needs or responding to market demand (Rosmaniar, 2019). According to Kotler and Armstrong, price is defined as the amount charged for a product or service, or the sum of all the values that customers exchange to obtain the benefits of owning or using a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008).

According to Kotler and Armstrong, place refers to all activities carried out by a company to ensure its products are easily accessible and available to the target market (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). In the context of services, place involves location and decisions regarding distribution channels, which relate to how services are delivered to consumers and the selection of strategic locations (Abdillah & Herawati, 2018). Promotion is the communication of information between marketers and consumers aimed at changing consumer attitudes and behaviors, particularly those who are unaware of the product, to encourage them to become consumers and purchase the product (Permatasari & Ashriana, 2019).

According to Lupiyoadi and Hamdani, in the context of service marketing, the role of people who provide services greatly influences the quality of the services delivered. Decisions related to people include aspects of selection, training, motivation, and human resource management (Lupiyoadi & Hamdani, 2009). According to Zeithaml and Bitner, the service process is a series of concrete procedures, mechanisms, and activities used to deliver services from the provider to the consumer. In the context of education, the management of educational services refers to a series of activities experienced by students throughout the learning process, including teaching, guidance, examinations, graduation, and other academic processes (Wijaya, 2012).

Physical evidence refers to the environment where services are delivered and where the company interacts with customers, including tangible elements that facilitate the service process or communication. According to Alma, the physical evidence of educational services is the school environment where students can interact, including visible elements that support the effectiveness of teaching activities (Wijaya, 2012).

### *Purchase Intention*

Purchase intention, according to Mowen (2011), is the result of learning and thinking processes that shape a person's perception. This interest creates motivation that is stored in the consumer's mind and develops into a strong desire. When needs arise, consumers will realize these desires in the form of purchasing decisions.

Kinncar and Taylor (2011) define purchase intention as a component of consumer behavior that reflects an individual's tendency to act before actually making a purchase.

Philip Kotler (2012: 34) explains that buying interest and purchasing behavior are influenced by several main factors, including:

1. Cultural factors, which include culture, subculture, and social class.
2. Social factors, such as reference groups, family, roles, and social status.
3. Personal factors, including age, life stage, occupation, economic conditions, lifestyle, and personality and self-concept.
4. Psychological factors, such as motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes.

Ferdinand (2011) identifies purchase intention through four main indicators:

1. Transactional interest, which is a person's tendency to buy a product.
2. Referential interest, which is a person's desire to recommend a product to others.
3. Preferential interest, which is consumer loyalty to a product that will only change if there are factors that influence their preferences.
4. Exploratory interest, which is the behavior of consumers who actively seek information related to the product of interest and look for positive aspects that can strengthen their interest.

## Method

### *Conceptual Framework*

A conceptual framework is a guide to structuring research, which serves to organize key ideas and concepts to make them easier to understand. In research, a conceptual framework connects key ideas and provides guidance for answering research questions or exploring a particular topic. By organizing interrelated concepts, a conceptual framework helps researchers understand and explain complex phenomena, as well as providing a clear direction for further research (Jabareen, 2009).

Unlike theoretical frameworks that usually focus on testing or predicting certain outcomes based on existing theories, a conceptual framework focuses more on organizing and breaking down ideas. This makes the conceptual framework more flexible, allowing researchers to identify key elements, such as variables and other factors, that are relevant to their research. In a conceptual framework, each concept is explained and connected to create a coherent picture of what will be studied. This helps researchers design research in a systematic and effective manner (Thorhallsson, 2017).

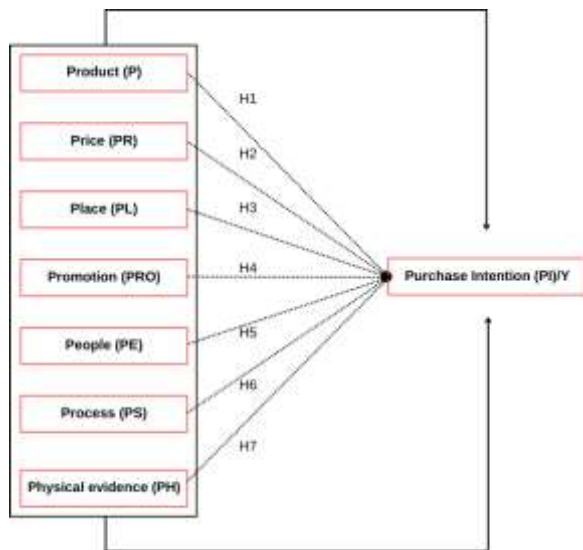


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework  
Source: Author

**Hypothesis**

According to Margono (2014) explains that the hypothesis comes from the words hipi and thesis. Hipo means less than, while thesis means opinion. So the hypothesis is an opinion or conclusion that is temporary. The hypothesis is a possible answer to the problem posed.

Based on the description of the framework of thinking above, the researcher tries to formulate the following:

- H1: Product has a significant effect on purchase intention
- H2: Price has a significant effect on purchase intention
- H3: Location has a significant effect on purchase intention
- H4: Promotion has a significant effect on purchase intention
- H5: People have a significant effect on purchase intention
- H6: Process has a significant effect on purchase intention
- H7: Physical Evidence has a significant effect on purchase intention
- H8: Marketing Mix (7P) simultaneously has a significant effect on purchase intention

**Data Collection and Analysis Method**

Data analysis is the process of examining, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data to discover useful information, generate conclusions, and support decision-making. This approach allows researchers to make sense of complex data by organizing it in a meaningful way, often through methods such as statistical modeling or pattern recognition. The goal is to create actionable insights and develop an organized understanding of data for specific purposes (Islam, 2020). Data collection methods are important processes in research that are systematically designed to gather relevant information to answer questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate results. This process includes techniques such as surveys, interviews, observations, and experiments, which are selected based on the purpose of the research as well as the type of data needed (Creswell, 2017).

This research uses mixed-methods, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS was used to analyze the relationship between Marketing Mix 7P and purchase intention based on questionnaire data. Quantitative analysis using SmartPLS, including outer model test to test construct validity and reliability, inner model test to measure the relationship between variables through path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) and t-statistic values, and  $R^2$  value to see the extent to which the independent variable can explain the dependent variable. Meanwhile, the

qualitative approach was conducted through interviews with the owner of Athena English Course and secondary data from the internet to find information about external analysis so as to strengthen quantitative findings.

**Results and Discussion**

Convergent validity of the measurement model with reflective indicators is assessed based on the correlation between item scores/component scores and average variance extracted (AVE) values estimated by PLS software.

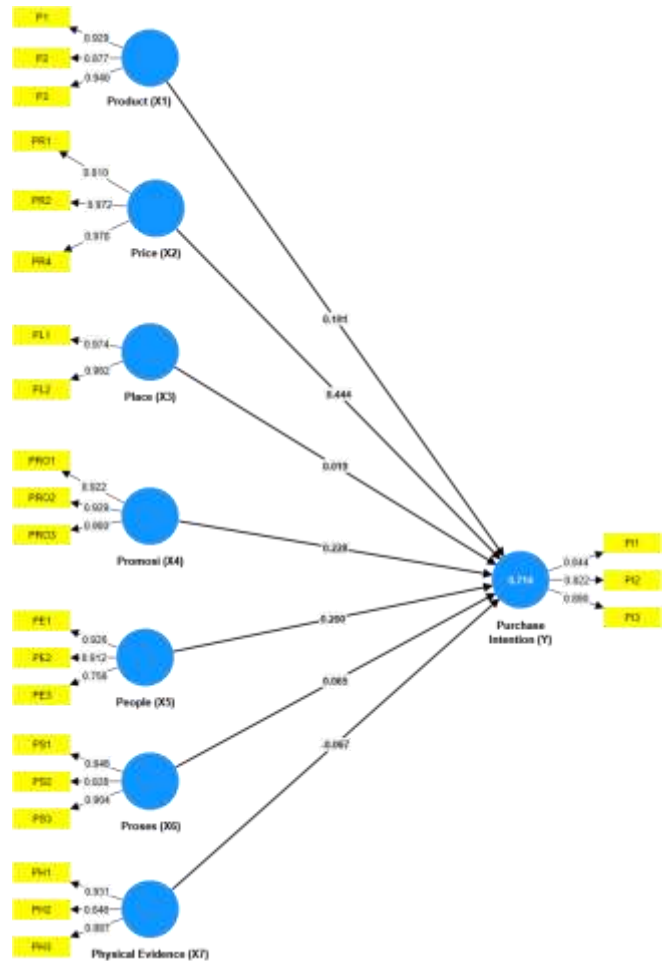


Fig 2. Outer Model  
Source: SmartPLS4

**Convergen Validity**

Table 1. Outer Loading Test Results  
Source: Output SmartPLS Algorithm (2024)

Variabel	Indicators	Outer Loading	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Description
Product (X1)	P1	0.929	0.839	Valid
	P2	0.877		Valid
	P3	0.940		Valid
Price (X2)	PR1	0.810	0.852	Valid
	PR2	0.957		Valid
	PR4	0.965		Valid
Place (X3)	PL1	0.918	0.937	Valid
	PL2	0.899		Valid
Promosi (X4)	PRO1	0.893	0.878	Valid
	PRO2	0.912		Valid
	PRO3	0.911		Valid
People (X5)	PE1	0.926	0.754	Valid
	PE2	0.912		Valid
	PE3	0.756		Valid
Proses (X6)	PS1	0.846	0.739	Valid
	PS2	0.828		Valid
	PS3	0.904		Valid
Physical Evidence (X7)	PH1	0.931	0.790	Valid
	PH2	0.847		Valid
	PH3	0.886		Valid
Purchase Intention (PY)	PI1	0.845	0.726	Valid
	PI2	0.819		Valid
	PI3	0.892		Valid

Based on the table above, all items have outer loading values above 0.70, indicating that all variables meet convergent validity. In accordance with the theory of Subhaktiyasa (2024) and Zulmi (2024), the loading factor value must be more than 0.7 for the indicator to have a strong contribution to the construct. In addition, according to Hair et al. (2021) and Henseler et al. (2009), an LF value  $\geq 0.70$  is considered sufficient to indicate a good correlation between the indicator and the variable it measures.

**Reliability Test**

The validity and reliability criteria can also be seen from the reliability value of a construct. Composite reliability that measures a construct can be evaluated with two types of measures, namely internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha. The construct is declared reliable if the composite reliability value is above 0.70. Hair et al. (2019)

**Table 2. Reliability Test Results**  
Source: Output SmartPLS Algorithm (2024)

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Description
Product (X1)	0.905	0.940	Reliabel
Price (X2)	0.911	0.945	Reliabel
Place (X3)	0.934	0.968	Reliabel
Promosi (X4)	0.932	0.956	Reliabel
People (X5)	0.832	0.901	Reliabel
Proses (X6)	0.824	0.895	Reliabel
Physical Evidence (X7)	0.875	0.918	Reliabel
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.812	0.888	Reliabel

SmartPLS output results show that Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70, indicating that reliability has been met. In addition, the Rho A value is also above 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. In accordance with Hair et al. (2019), evaluation of the PLS-SEM model requires a reliability test, where the composite reliability must be more than 0.70 to ensure good internal consistency. Hair et al. (2021) also added that Cronbach's Alpha above 0.70 reflects high consistency between indicators in one variable, thus meeting the minimum standards for reflective models.

**Hypothesis Testing**

This hypothesis testing is based on the results of the Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis by conducting the Bootstrapping test. using a confidence level of 95% (alpha 5%). The hypothesis in this study is if the T-statistic value > t-table then the hypothesis is accepted, if the T-statistics < confidence level (alpha = 0.5) then the hypothesis is accepted, if the p-value > confidence level (alpha = 0.5) then the hypothesis is rejected. Based on the

hypothesis test conducted, the hypothesis test results are as follows. Hair et al. (2019) and Hair et al. (2021)

**Table 3. Path Coefficient Results**  
Source: Output SmartPLS Botstrapping (2024)

Variable/Konstrak	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Conclusion
Product (X1) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.191	0.188	0.052	3.650	0.000	Hypothesis accepted
Price (X2) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.444	0.449	0.054	8.188	0.000	Hypothesis accepted
Place (X3) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.019	0.020	0.042	0.441	0.659	Hypothesis rejected
Promosi (X4) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.228	0.227	0.044	5.160	0.000	Hypothesis accepted
People (X5) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.200	0.198	0.049	4.074	0.000	Hypothesis accepted
Proses (X6) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.065	0.067	0.041	1.580	0.114	Hypothesis rejected
Physical Evidence (X7) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	-0.067	-0.058	0.038	1.770	0.077	Hypothesis rejected

**Product (X1)**

Product (X1) has a significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 3.650 and a p-value of 0.000, which is smaller than the 0.05 significance level. This shows that product variables play an important role in influencing consumer purchase intentions. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1) which states that product has a significant effect on Purchase Intention is accepted. This aligns with the findings of Nurhabibah and Murniati (2016), which indicate that products significantly and positively influence consumer purchase interest. Hence, sellers must provide products that capture attention, generate demand, and encourage purchases to fulfill market needs.

**Price (X2)**

Price (X2) is proven to have a significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 8.188 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. These results indicate that the price aspect is an important factor influencing purchase intention. Thus, the second hypothesis (H2) which states that price has a significant effect on Purchase Intention is accepted. These findings are consistent with the study by Tsaniya and Telagawathi (2022), which demonstrates a positive and significant relationship between price and buying interest. When the price aligns more closely with consumer preferences, it can positively impact their buying interest.

**Place (X3)**

Place or location (X3) has no significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 0.441 and a p-value of 0.659, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. These results indicate that location or product availability is not strong enough to influence consumer purchase intentions. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3) which states that location has a significant effect on Purchase Intention is rejected. However, previous research Harlim & Siagian, (2020) shows that strategic location usually increases purchase intention. However, in this case, location is considered to have little effect on purchase intention for IELTS class products.

**Promotion (X4)**

Promotion (X4) has a significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 5.160 and a p-value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. This indicates that promotional efforts carried out effectively can increase consumer purchase intentions. Thus, the fourth hypothesis (H4) which states that promotion has a significant effect on Purchase Intention is accepted. The results of this study are in line with Denniswara's

research (2016) which shows that promotion has a significant positive effect on purchase intention. As well as Adelia's research (2018) which shows that online promotion has a positive influence on repurchase intentions.

#### People (X5)

People (X5) has a significant influence on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 4.074 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. This suggests that individual involvement, such as salespeople or support staff, makes a major contribution in influencing purchase intentions. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis (H5) which states that people have a significant influence on Purchase Intention is accepted. These results are in line with research by Harlim & Siagian, (2020) which states that the variable "people" has a positive and significant influence on buying interest and purchasing decisions. This shows that direct interaction between employees and consumers plays an important role in shaping consumer buying interest.

#### Process (X6)

Process (X6) has no significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 1.580 and a p-value of 0.114, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This shows that process elements, such as service procedures or mechanisms, do not have a strong enough influence on consumer purchase intentions. Thus, the sixth hypothesis (H6) which states that process has a significant influence on Purchase Intention is rejected. The results of this study are in line with the results of research Harlim & Siagian, (2020) which explains that the process does not have a significant effect on purchase intention or purchase interest due to the process including how the company serves the requests of each consumer is not a major consideration because consumers feel there is no significant difference from the service process.

#### Physical Evidence (X7)

Physical evidence (X7) has no significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) with a t-statistic value of 1.770 and a p-value of 0.077, which is still greater than the significance threshold of 0.05. These results indicate that elements of physical evidence, such as store design or product packaging, are not enough to significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis (H7) which states that physical evidence has a significant influence on Purchase Intention is rejected. This is in line with the results of research Yudho, (2022), namely physical evidence has no significant effect on buying interest. significant effect on buying interest because physical evidence has a unidirectional relationship but does not have a meaningful.

#### R Square

The following are the results of R square which has processed the data with smart PLS 4.0

**Table 4. R Square Test Results**  
Source: Output SmartPLS Bootstrapping (2024)

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted	Category
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.714	0.706	Strong

In the R square test results, it shows a confidence of 0.706 and is in the strong category, meaning that the variables Product (X1), Price (X2), Place (X3), Promotion (X4), People (X5), Process (X6) and Physical Evidence (X7) on Purchase Intention (Y) are 70.6% and the remaining 29.4% is influenced by other external factors or other variables outside the study. This is in line with the theory from Hair et al., (2019) which explains that a higher R<sup>2</sup> value indicates a greater explanatory ability of the model. As a guideline, R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered substantial, moderate, and weak levels of explanatory power, respectively

#### Limitation of The Study

This research has several limitations that become the focus and clarity of scope. First, this research will only be conducted at Athena English Course as the object of research. Other English course institutions will not be part of this research, so

the findings generated are only applicable to Athena English Course and may not be relevant if applied to other institutions that have different characteristics.

Secondly, this research will focus exclusively on business issues related to the sales performance of online IELTS classes at Athena English Course. This limitation means that other divisions, such as administration, or operations, will not be part of the discussion. In other words, this research will not examine aspects that are outside of sales, even though they may have an indirect impact on overall business performance.

In addition, the approach taken in this research will only focus on marketing strategy solutions as proposed improvements to enhance sales performance. Other business strategies, such as operational effectiveness, financial strategies and others, will not be investigated. This limitation allows the research to explore marketing strategies that are suitable for the business issue at hand so as to find the right solution for athena english course.

#### Conclusions

Based on the research findings, Athena English Course is facing challenges in increasing enrollment for its online IELTS preparation classes. An analysis using SmartPLS indicates that among the seven elements of the 7P marketing mix, only product, price, promotion, and people have a significant positive impact on purchase intention. In contrast, place, process, and physical evidence show a weaker or even insignificant influence, meaning they do not strongly determine a customer's decision to enroll in Athena's courses.

To address these challenges and improve business performance, Athena must focus on enhancing product differentiation by offering unique course features that add value for students. Additionally, pricing strategies should align with the quality of facilities and benefits provided, ensuring affordability while maintaining perceived value. Furthermore, a more integrated and data-driven digital marketing strategy should be implemented, leveraging social media, SEO, and influencer collaborations to boost visibility and engagement. Lastly, the involvement of highly skilled and professional instructors is crucial, as the quality of teaching directly influences customer satisfaction and retention. Strengthening these four critical factors will allow Athena to build a stronger competitive position, improve brand perception, and ultimately increase enrollment in its online IELTS preparation courses.

#### Recommendation

Athena's strategy, based on the results of in-depth analysis and research, the product that can be developed is to focus on the IELTS for WHV Australia program, this product is suitable for a more segmented and underutilized market to avoid direct competition with established IELTS brands. WHV enthusiasts who have experienced a significant increase in recent years. This segment offers a great opportunity for Athena to position itself as the premier IELTS preparation provider for individuals planning to apply for the WHV, giving Athena product differentiation and value over other competitors.

To reach this market more effectively, it is imperative for Athena to create an integrated promotional plan such as establishing a dedicated digital marketing team with a well-allocated budget to manage content creation, social media interaction and targeted advertising. This team will be instrumental in expanding Athena's market reach, increasing brand awareness, and highlighting unique advantages over competitors.

In addition, adjustments to the pricing strategy for the IELTS program will be made to make it more competitive in the market without compromising on the high quality of service. This pricing strategy aims to attract more potential participants, including price-sensitive individuals who still need quality IELTS preparation. By combining these strategies,

Athena can strengthen its position in the market, attract more WHV applicants, and drive sustainable business growth.

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