



# Aligning STP and Marketing Mix Strategies to Strengthen Perceived Value for Gymnasium Business Sustainability

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**Abstract.** The fitness industry in Indonesia is expanding rapidly, creating both opportunities and competition for gymnasium services. To remain competitive, businesses must adopt strategies that not only attract customers but also ensure sustainability. Previous studies often examined isolated elements of the 7P Marketing Mix, such as pricing or promotion, or narrowly emphasized digital strategies, with limited attention to alignment with segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP). Few have explored how such integration builds perceived value as a foundation for business sustainability, especially in small community based gyms in emerging markets. This study examines the alignment between STP and the 7P Marketing Mix and its role in shaping perceived value at PerdosFit Makassar. A descriptive qualitative approach was applied through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving the owner, three staff members, and twenty-six active members. The findings indicate that educational service orientation, flexible membership packages, and digital visibility through Google Maps and Instagram enhanced perceived value. Service quality, instructor competence, and structured onboarding strengthened the gymnasium educational and community identity. The study concludes that aligning STP with the 7P Marketing Mix enhances perceived value, which drives acquisition, retention, and sustainable growth.

**Keywords:** STP Strategy Integration, Marketing Mix Alignment, Perceived Value Creation, Gymnasium Business Sustainability, Member Retention Strategy

## 1 Introduction

The fitness industry in Indonesia has experienced rapid expansion in recent years, reflecting the growing public awareness of healthy lifestyles [1]. Consumer preferences are no longer limited to access to fitness equipment; instead, they demand safe, comfortable, measurable, and knowledge-based service experiences [2]. This shift has intensified competition among gymnasium services, particularly for small-scale and community-based centers that often operate under resource constraints [2, 3]. Under these conditions, businesses must adopt strategic approaches that balance customer expectations and operational realities to achieve long-term sustainability [4].

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Despite this industry growth, many studies on service marketing have tended to analyze single elements of the 7P Marketing Mix, such as pricing or promotion or have focused narrowly on digital strategies [3, 5, 6]. Few studies have systematically examined how the seven elements of the marketing mix can be strategically aligned with the framework of segmenting, targeting, and positioning (STP) [3]. This lack of integration is important because strategic alignment is essential not only to achieve short-term outcomes, such as customer acquisition and retention, but also to build perceived value that supports sustainable competitiveness [3, 4]. This gap is particularly critical in contexts such as gymnasium services, where location, facilities, and financial resources are often limited, but customer expectations of value remain high [2].

The theoretical literature emphasizes that STP provides a foundation for identifying diverse customer needs, selecting feasible and profitable segments, and formulating a distinctive positioning [7]. Simultaneously, the 7P Marketing Mix—product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence—operationalizes these strategic choices into concrete practices that shape customer experiences [8]. However, empirical research explicitly connecting the alignment of the STP and 7P framework with perceived value and sustainability outcomes in gymnasium services remains scarce [9]. Therefore, this study will contribute by developing an integrative framework that links STP and the 7P Marketing Mix, and by providing practical insights for managers of community-based gyms to enhance perceived value and achieve business sustainability.

Accordingly, this study aims to achieve three objectives: (1) to describe the implementation of the 7P Marketing Mix at PerdosFit Makassar, (2) to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors of marketing strategies in enhancing customer acquisition and retention, and (3) to examine the strategic alignment between the STP and the 7P Marketing Mix in creating perceived value as a pathway to business sustainability in gymnasium services.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The 7P Marketing Mix extends the traditional 4P framework by incorporating people, processes, and physical evidence, which are particularly important in service contexts [3]. This framework highlights that customer value arises not only from tangible offerings but also from intangible experiences, such as service interactions, trust, and comfort [10]. In gymnasium services, the 7P model captures the complexity of membership decisions, in which service variety, flexible pricing, digital promotion, instructor competence and facilities shape the customer's perception [11].

The Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) framework complements the 7P Marketing Mix by providing a strategic foundation for identifying diverse customer needs, selecting viable and profitable segments, and formulating distinctive value propositions [7]. When integrated, STP and 7P ensure that strategic decisions are consistently translated into operational practices, forming the basis for sustainable competitive advantage [12].

## 2.2 Empirical Studies

Empirical research across service industries confirms that the 7P Marketing Mix plays a central role in shaping customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention [3, 8]. In hospitality, service quality, staff interaction, and ambience drive repeat visits [13]. Patient trust, competence, and structured processes dominate healthcare. Price flexibility and online visibility shape engagement on digital platforms [6]. Although the weight of each element varies by industry, the 7P remains essential for delivering value [3].

Similarly, STP has been widely applied to the design of service strategies. Segmentation helps identify heterogeneous customer needs, targeting ensures alignment with resources, and positioning defines distinctiveness [12]. However, many studies have analyzed the STP and the 7P separately, which limits the understanding of how strategic choices at the STP level are consistently operationalized through the seven elements [14]. While recent discussions highlight the need for integration between STP and 7P, empirical research that explicitly explores this linkage remains limited, particularly in small-scale or resource-constrained service businesses such as gyms [15].

## 2.3 Relationship Between Variables

Business sustainability in services goes beyond profitability to include the maintenance of long-term relationships, adaptation to market shifts, and effective management of limited resources. For gymnasium services, sustaining membership growth is critical because retention ensures revenue stability and supports community development [16]. Achieving such sustainability requires marketing strategies that attract new members and strengthen loyalty by creating perceived value [17].

Aligning the STP with the 7P Marketing Mix is central to this process. The STP provides a strategic direction, whereas the 7P operationalizes it into tangible experiences that influence how customers perceive value. When the perceived value is high, customers are more likely to remain loyal, recommend services, and contribute to sustainable competitiveness [18]. However, empirical studies explicitly linking this alignment with perceived value and business sustainability in gymnasium services are scarce [19, 20, 21]. The present study positions gymnasiums as a relevant setting for advancing the knowledge of strategic alignment and its role in sustaining competitiveness in emerging market contexts.

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study, focusing on PerdosFit Makassar, a community-based gym. The design was chosen to explore in depth how the 7P Marketing Mix is implemented, how it aligns with Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) strategies, and how these interactions contribute to building perceived value and sustaining business competitiveness. Data collection was

conducted from April to May 2024 to capture actual member experiences within the operational setting.

### **3.2 Population and Sample of Participants**

The participants included one owner, three instructors, and twenty-six active members. The member criteria included a minimum of one month of active membership, familiarity with the service processes, and willingness to share experiences. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that the participants directly represented those who engaged in the design and consumption of gymnasium services. Data collection was concluded once saturation was reached, that is, when no new themes emerged.

### **3.3 Data Type and Source**

The study relied on primary data collected from direct observations and interviews, as well as secondary data gathered from documentation. Observations were conducted during both peak and off-peak hours to capture service flows, such as registration, safety briefings, instructor support, and facility use. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' perceptions of each 7P element, STP alignment, and factors affecting acquisition, retention, and perceived value of the training. The documentation included membership brochures, social media posts, Google Map reviews, and administrative records.

### **3.4 Instrument Design**

The data collection process in this study was supported by four main instruments that ensured the validity and traceability of the findings. (1) An interview guide was designed to link questions directly with the elements of the 7P Marketing Mix, STP decisions, and perceived value, allowing participants' responses to be systematically connected with the research framework. (2) An observation sheet was employed to capture the flow of services, including registration procedures, safety briefings, instructor–member interactions, and the condition of facilities, thereby providing contextual evidence of how strategies were implemented in practice. (3) A document checklist was used to review marketing communications, price lists, and online visibility materials in a structured manner, ensuring that documentary sources complemented primary data.

(4) Finally, field notes were taken to distinguish between factual records, initial reflections, and emerging analytical ideas, which strengthened the rigor and traceability of the data analysis process. Four instruments guided the data collection process.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Technique**

Thematic analysis was used to code and interpret the data. First, the transcripts and notes were read repeatedly to identify relevant patterns. Codes were assigned to each of the seven 7P elements and their alignment with the STP. These codes were grouped

into broader categories and synthesized into themes reflecting how marketing strategies shape perceived value and contribute to business sustainability.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were ensured by obtaining informed consent from all participants, maintaining anonymity through coding (O = owner, S = staff, M = member), and protecting sensitive data. Member checking was conducted by sharing the preliminary findings with key participants to validate the interpretations. Triangulation across sources and methods reinforces the credibility and trustworthiness of these findings.

## 4 Result

### 4.1 Implementation of the 7P Marketing Mix at PerdosFit Makassar

The findings indicate that PerdosFit Makassar operationalises the 7P Marketing Mix through an educational service orientation combined with a structured onboarding approach. The product dimension is expressed through science-informed coaching practices and introductory training sessions that are designed to build members' confidence and reduce uncertainty during early participation. The price dimension is delivered through flexible membership options, including daily, monthly, and annual packages, which enable prospective members to trial the service before committing to longer-term plans.

In relation to place, PerdosFit benefits from proximity to the university and nearby residential areas, while simultaneously facing an accessibility constraint arising from its relatively hidden physical location. This weakness is partially mitigated through digital visibility, particularly via Google Maps. Promotion is predominantly driven by word of mouth, Google Maps reviews, and Instagram engagement, indicating that lowcost social proof and discoverability function as the primary channels of member acquisition. The people element is characterised by competent and empathetic instructors who provide continuous guidance, thereby strengthening trust and reinforcing the gym's educational identity. The process element is reflected in a simple registration procedure combined with a safety briefing and introductory training flow that standardises early service encounters. Finally, physical evidence is demonstrated through clean and safe facilities, the presence of air conditioning, and modified equipment that aligns with members' practical training needs.

**Table 1.** Summary of 7P Implementation at PerdosFit Makassar and Observed Member Value Outcomes

7P Element	Operationalisation at PerdosFit Makassar	Observed value experienced by members
Product	Educational coaching orientation; structured onboarding and introductory training	Knowledge-based training experience; confidence; perceived safety

Price	Flexible packages (daily, monthly, annual); transparent fee adjustments linked to facility upgrades	Perceived fairness; affordability; reduced commitment risk
Place	Close to university; supported by Google Maps visibility despite hidden location	Practical access through digital discovery; convenience for nearby segments
Promotion	Word of mouth; Google Maps reviews; Instagram activity	Credibility through social proof; easier discovery; low-friction acquisition
People	Competent and empathetic instructors providing continuous guidance	Trust; personalised attention; reduced anxiety during training
Process	Simple registration; safety briefing; standardised onboarding flow	Service clarity; comfort; efficiency; reduced drop-out risk
Physical Evidence	Clean facilities; safe equipment; air conditioning; equipment adapted to needs	Tangible comfort; reliability; improved service image

Table 1 synthesises how PerdosFit translates service strategy into operational practices that shape member experiences. The pattern that emerges is one of value creation grounded in reassurance and credibility. Educational coaching, instructor capability, and structured onboarding collectively support confidence, safety, and trust. Flexible pricing packages reinforce perceived fairness by enabling gradual commitment, while promotion through reviews and referrals strengthens credibility without requiring substantial promotional expenditure. Although the gym's physical accessibility is constrained by location visibility and parking limitations, the findings suggest that digital discoverability through Google Maps offsets part of this disadvantage by supporting initial access and trial behaviour.

#### 4.2 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Shaping Acquisition and Retention

The findings identify several factors that strengthen the effectiveness of PerdosFit's marketing strategy. Acquisition is supported by strong word of mouth dynamics, positive Google Maps reviews, and an active digital presence that increases discoverability. Retention is reinforced through structured onboarding that reduces member anxiety, competent instructors who build trust through continuous guidance, and transparent pricing that members perceive as fair and proportionate to the facilities provided.

Nevertheless, barriers remain. The gym's location is described as relatively hidden, which can reduce spontaneous walk-in traffic and limit convenience for first-time visitors. Limited parking availability is also reported as a persistent constraint that affects accessibility, particularly for members who travel by private vehicle. These inhibiting factors do not negate perceived value, but they represent operational frictions that can reduce acquisition efficiency and may influence retention among members for whom accessibility is a dominant consideration.

**Table 2.** Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Evident in the Marketing Strategy at PerdosFit Makassar

Dimension	Supporting factors	Inhibiting factors
Acquisition	Word of mouth referrals; positive Google Maps reviews; Instagram engagement; digital visibility via Google Maps	Hidden physical location reducing visibility; limited parking affecting first-time access
Retention	Structured onboarding reducing anxiety; competent instructors building trust; transparent and flexible pricing; clean and safe facilities	Accessibility frictions for vehicle users; limited parking capacity during peak periods

Table 2 indicates that PerdosFit's growth is enabled primarily through credibility-based mechanisms rather than cost-intensive promotional campaigns. Digital and community-based referral channels reduce acquisition costs, while onboarding structure and instructor competence support retention by stabilising early service experiences and building relational trust. Conversely, the principal constraints are physical and infrastructural, rather than strategic. This implies that the sustainability pathway is driven by value delivery and service consistency, but remains partially exposed to limitations in access and convenience.

#### 4.3 Alignment of STP with the 7P Marketing Mix in Creating Perceived Value for Sustainability

The findings show a coherent alignment between segmentation, targeting, and positioning and the seven operational elements of the marketing mix. Segmentation is directed towards students and young professionals, with targeting focused on the campus community and nearby residential areas. Positioning emphasises educational, safe, and affordable services. These strategic choices are consistently translated into product design (educational coaching and onboarding), people (instructor competence and empathy), process (structured service flow), and price (flexible packages and transparent adjustments).

This alignment produces perceived value expressed through safety, trust, comfort, and perceived fairness. The findings further suggest that these value dimensions operate as the practical mechanism linking strategy to sustainability outcomes, since they encourage acquisition through credibility and discovery, and retention through confidence, comfort, and perceived relational support.

## 5 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the alignment of STP and the 7P Marketing Mix is decisive in shaping perceived value and supporting the sustainability of gymnasium businesses. Educational service orientation and structured onboarding emerged as

central practices. As O1 noted, “Coaches train based on science, so members avoid fitness myths,” while S1 explained, “We are trained to explain not only what to do but also why it is important.” These statements highlight how competence and guidance foster member trust. This aligns with previous studies that found that tangible and intangible service attributes are critical to customer experience and loyalty, and that the service marketing mix and staff competence are key sources of competitive advantage [3, 11]

Structured processes further reinforced confidence and retention. M5 remarked, “The instructor always explains the reasons behind movements, so I feel more confident when training,” and S3 confirmed, “We follow a clear flow when welcoming new members: registration, safety briefing, and then basic training.” Such practices indicate that clarity in service delivery reduces anxiety and enhances loyalty. This aligns with previous studies that emphasized the importance of strategic branding and positioning sustained by integrated management practices, and that demonstrated how ethical service practices in fitness centers foster loyalty, trust, and word of mouth communication [12, 16].

Pricing and accessibility also played an important role in building perceived fairness. M12 stated, “At first, I tried the daily package, then continued monthly because it suited me,” while O1 added, “We increased the fees, but also upgraded the facilities.” Members accepted price adjustments as long as improvements were evident. This aligns with previous studies that showed how marketing mix strategies, including pricing, directly impact marketing performance through brand image, and that revealed how service quality and transparent pricing reinforce satisfaction and trust [14, 20]. In a broader sense, sustainable management requires balancing profitability with responsibility, as reflected in how PerdosFit enhances facilities while keeping fees accessible [15].

Promotion channels were particularly influential in customer acquisition. S2 explained, “Most new members say they came because of recommendations from their friends, while others mention they found us on Google Maps.” This underscores the role of both offline credibility and digital tools, often referred to as a phygital experience where digital visibility complements community-based referrals in shaping customer behavior [10]. Previous studies have also shown that social media marketing increases satisfaction in service industries and that promotional and location strategies strongly shape consumer purchase preferences [13, 17].

Physical evidence also contributed significantly to perceived value. M2 observed, “The equipment meets my needs, the place is clean, but parking is limited.” Despite infrastructural constraints, cleanliness and facility safety were consistently appreciated. Previous studies have confirmed that tangible elements such as cleanliness and comfort influence loyalty, and that service quality enhances brand image and loyalty [11, 18]. Furthermore, the importance of customer relationship management in sustaining satisfaction and retention has also been reinforced in prior research [19].

Taken together, these findings confirm that PerdosFit’s STP, which segments students and young professionals, targets the campus community and nearby areas, and positions the brand as affordable and educational, is effectively reinforced through the 7P Marketing Mix [5]. Previous research has demonstrated that integrating the marketing mix contributes directly to growth, while customer perceived value should remain

central to experience management strategies [21]. By consistently aligning strategic intent with marketing mix execution, PerdosFit has succeeded in generating perceived value in the form of safety, trust, fairness, and comfort. This value, in turn, drives both acquisition and retention, ensuring long-term business sustainability not through heavy investment but through strategic clarity, efficient resource utilization, and a strong community orientation [4, 15].

To provide a clearer synthesis of how strategic choices are operationalized, the linkages between STP, the 7P Marketing Mix, perceived value, and their contributions to business sustainability at PerdosFit Makassar are summarized in table. This table illustrates the systematic alignment between strategic intent and service delivery, highlighting how each marketing element reinforces value creation and long-term competitiveness.

**Table 3.** Linkages of STP and 7P Elements with Perceived Value and Sustainability

STP	7P Element	Perceived Value Created	Contribution
Segmentation (students, young professionals)	Product (educational coaching, onboarding)	Confidence, safety, knowledge based experience	Differentiation from competitors, stronger loyalty
Segmentation (students, young professionals)	People (competent, empathetic instructors)	Trust, personalized attention	Strong community bonds, stable retention
Targeting (campus community, nearby residents)	Place (close to campus, visibility via Google Maps)	Accessibility despite hidden location	Overcoming physical barriers with digital presence
Targeting (campus community, nearby residents)	Promotion (word of mouth, Google Maps, Instagram)	Credibility, discovery-based access	Low-cost, high impact acquisition
Positioning (educational, safe, affordable)	Price (daily, monthly, annual, transparent increases)	Fairness, affordability	Balanced revenue, sustainable growth
Positioning (educational, safe, affordable)	Process (clear registration, onboarding, safety briefing)	Reduced anxiety, comfort, efficiency	Retention, minimized dropout
Positioning (educational, safe, affordable)	Physical Evidence (clean facilities, safe equipment, airconditioning)	Tangible comfort, reliability	Enhanced service image, member satisfaction

The integration of STP and the 7P Marketing Mix at PerdosFit Makassar consistently produces perceived value that translates into trust, fairness, comfort, and long-term loyalty. The structured alignment between strategic intent and operational practices allows the gymnasium to sustain member acquisition and retention, ensuring business sustainability through resource efficiency and clarity of positioning rather than through large-

scale investment. This confirms that small-scale community-based gymnasiums can achieve competitiveness and growth by relying on strategic alignment and value-driven practices, thereby closing the discussion of this study.

## 6 Conclusion

This study shows that the strategic alignment of STP and the 7P Marketing Mix at PerdosFit Makassar effectively created perceived value and sustained business growth in a resource-limited setting. Segmentation targeted students and young professionals, based on campus and residential proximity combined with digital discovery, while positioning emphasized affordability, safety, and educational orientation. These strategies were consistently realized through product design, flexible pricing, low-cost promotion, competent instructors, structured processes, and reliable facilities, making the positioning tangible for the members. Perceived value, shaped by safety, fairness, competence, and trust, is the basis for sustainable acquisition and retention. Structured onboarding and science-based coaching reduced anxiety and built confidence, whereas transparent fee adjustments with facility improvements reinforced fairness. Word-of-mouth referrals and Google Maps visibility were the main growth channels, ensuring stable expansion without large financial investments to be made.

The contributions of this study are threefold. Theoretically, this study enriches the service marketing literature by showing that STP and 7P function as an integrated system that enhances perceived value and competitiveness. Empirically, it adds to the limited research on small-scale gyms in emerging markets with evidence from a community-based study. Practically, it guides managers that cost-efficient yet impactful strategies, such as educational orientation, transparent pricing, community referrals, and digital visibility, are effective for maintaining loyalty and sustaining long-term growth when applied consistently. This study has limitations; the single-case qualitative design restricts the generalization of the findings to gymnasiums with different characteristics. The analysis was limited to the relationship between STP, 7P, perceived value, and sustainability, leaving other relevant factors beyond the scope. Future research may broaden the context to various types of gyms, both community-based and commercial, across regions, and include additional variables influencing how marketing strategies shape perceived value and sustainability in the fitness industry. Applying mixedmethod approaches with validated instruments and longitudinal data would further strengthen the evidence base and offer a more comprehensive understanding of how internal and external factors jointly drive long-term competitiveness in the fitness industry.

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