Journal of Economics and Management
2026, Vol. 4, No. 2, 200-209
https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

Strengthening the Competitiveness of Higher Education Institutions Through a SWOT Analysis Approach at UNTARA

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Received: 10/04/2026 | Revised: 19/04/2026 | Accepted: 31/05/2026 | Published: 17/06/2026

Abstract: This study aims to analyze strategies for strengthening the competitiveness of higher education institutions through a SWOT analysis approach at UNTARA. Increasing competition among universities requires institutions to formulate effective strategies to enhance academic quality, institutional performance, and stakeholder trust. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to identify internal factors, including strengths and weaknesses, as well as external factors, namely opportunities and threats, faced by UNTARA. Data were collected through document analysis, interviews, and observations involving university leaders, lecturers, and administrative staff. The results indicate that UNTARA possesses significant strengths in institutional commitment, human resource potential, and community engagement, while facing challenges related to infrastructure development, research productivity, and digital governance. Externally, opportunities arise from policy support, growing demand for higher education, and technological advancement, whereas threats include intense competition, rapid changes in educational standards, and globalization. Based on the SWOT matrix, several strategic alternatives are proposed, including optimizing human resource development, improving academic quality assurance, strengthening partnerships, and enhancing institutional governance. These strategies are expected to sustainably strengthen UNTARA's competitiveness.

Keywords: *strengthening, competitiveness, higher education, SWOT analysis, UNTARA*

How to Cite: Riyanto, S., & Sutarman (2026). Strengthening the Competitiveness of Higher Education Institutions Through a SWOT Analysis Approach at UNTARA. *Journal of Economics and Management, 4*(2), 200-209. https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

INTRODUCTION

The competitiveness of higher education institutions has become a critical issue in the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement. Universities are no longer evaluated solely on their educational function; they are also required to demonstrate excellence in academic quality, research productivity, community engagement, governance, and graduate employability. Increasing competition among universities, both nationally and internationally, demands strategic management approaches that enable institutions to adapt to dynamic environmental changes and maintain sustainable growth (Ramayanti et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, higher education institutions face complex challenges, including policy changes, accreditation demands, digital transformation, and heightened public expectations for quality and relevance. Universities are expected to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also adaptive, innovative, and responsive to labor market needs. Consequently, strengthening institutional competitiveness has become a

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

strategic priority to ensure relevance, credibility, and long-term sustainability (Kafrawi, 2022).

UNTARA, as a developing higher education institution, is required to continuously enhance its competitive position amid intense competition from both public and private universities. Although UNTARA has demonstrated commitment to academic development and community service, it still faces several internal and external challenges that may affect its competitiveness. These challenges include optimizing human resources, improving research and publication performance, enhancing academic services, and strengthening institutional governance and infrastructure (Kulle et al., 2025).

To respond effectively to these challenges, higher education institutions need a systematic and comprehensive strategic planning tool. SWOT analysis is widely recognized as a strategic management approach that helps identify internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. By integrating these factors, SWOT analysis enables institutions to formulate strategic alternatives that are aligned with their internal capacities and external environmental conditions (Nurfadhilah et al., 2025).

The application of SWOT analysis in higher education provides a structured framework for evaluating institutional performance and determining strategic priorities. Through this approach, universities can capitalize on their strengths, minimize weaknesses, exploit emerging opportunities, and mitigate potential threats. This strategic alignment is essential for sustainably and measurably strengthening institutional competitiveness (Kurniadi, 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze and formulate strategies to strengthen UNTARA's competitiveness using a SWOT analysis. The findings of this study are expected to contribute not only to UNTARA's strategic development but also to provide insights for other higher education institutions facing similar challenges in enhancing their competitive advantage (Prayitno, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a strategic management approach. The qualitative method was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of UNTARA's internal and external conditions affecting institutional competitiveness. The SWOT analysis framework was used as the primary analytical tool to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats influencing UNTARA's competitive position (Gürel, 2017).

Research Site and Subject

The research was conducted at UNTARA as a higher education institution operating in a competitive educational environment. The research subjects included university leaders, faculty members, and administrative staff who are directly involved in academic management, strategic planning, and institutional development. These participants were selected because of their comprehensive understanding of UNTARA's policies, performance, and strategic challenges (Devi et al., 2022).

Data Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources:

1. *Primary data* were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observations. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including university executives,

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

department heads, lecturers, and quality assurance personnel. The interviews focused on identifying internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats related to competitiveness.
2. *Secondary data* were collected from institutional documents, including strategic plans, accreditation reports, academic guidelines, performance evaluations, and relevant policy documents. These documents provided contextual and historical insights into UNTARA's development and strategic direction (Nisa et al., 2024).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in this study consisted of:
1. *Semi-structured interviews* allow flexibility to explore participants' perspectives while maintaining consistency across key themes related to competitiveness and strategic management.
2. *Document analysis* examines formal institutional records and policies to support and triangulate interview findings.
3. *Observation*, conducted to understand academic activities, governance practices, and institutional culture that may influence competitiveness.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out through several systematic stages:
1. *Data reduction* involves selecting, categorizing, and simplifying raw data from interviews, documents, and observations.
2. *Data display*, where relevant information was organized into matrices and thematic tables, particularly SWOT matrices (IFAS and EFAS).
3. *Conclusion drawing and verification*, where patterns and relationships among strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified and interpreted.

The SWOT analysis was conducted by constructing the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) and External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) matrices. Each factor was assigned a weight and rating to determine its relative importance and impact on institutional competitiveness. Based on the SWOT matrix, strategic alternatives (SO, WO, ST, and WT strategies) were formulated (Chou et al., 2020).

Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applied several trustworthiness criteria:
1. *Triangulation of data sources and methods* by comparing information obtained from interviews, documents, and observations.
2. *Member checking*, where selected participants reviewed preliminary findings to confirm accuracy and relevance.
3. *Peer debriefing* involves discussions with academic peers to enhance analytical rigor and reduce researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were maintained, and data were used solely for academic purposes (Barja, 2024).

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of Internal Factors (IFAS)

An internal factor analysis was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses influencing UNTARA's competitiveness. Data were obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Each factor was weighted based on its importance and rated according to its current condition (Haque et al., 2024).

Key strengths include institutional commitment to quality improvement, adequate human resource potential, and strong community engagement. Meanwhile, key weaknesses include limited research productivity, inadequate infrastructure, and suboptimal digital academic services (Widiastuti & Santoso, 2022).

Table 1. Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS)

Internal Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Strengths			
Clear institutional vision and mission	0.15	4	0.60
Qualified lecturers and staff	0.14	4	0.56
Strong commitment to quality improvement	0.13	3	0.39
Active community engagement programs	0.10	3	0.30
Total Strength Score	**0.52**		**1.85**
Weaknesses			
Limited research and publication output	0.18	2	0.36
Inadequate academic infrastructure	0.15	2	0.30
Limited digitalization of academic services	0.10	2	0.20
Inconsistent quality assurance implementation	0.05	2	0.10
Total Weakness Score	**0.48**		**0.96**
Total IFAS Score	**1.00**		**2.81**

Interpretation:

The IFAS score of 2.81 indicates that UNTARA's internal condition is relatively strong, as strengths outweigh weaknesses. However, strategic improvements are still required, particularly in research performance and infrastructure development (Hasbullah et al., 2025).

Analysis of External Factors (EFAS)

An external analysis identified opportunities and threats affecting UNTARA's competitive environment. Opportunities are mainly driven by policy support and technological advancement, while threats arise from competition and regulatory changes.

Table 2. External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS)

External Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Opportunities			
Increasing demand for higher education	0.18	4	0.72
Government policy support and funding	0.16	3	0.48
Technological advancement in education	0.14	3	0.42
Potential partnerships with industry	0.12	3	0.36

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

External Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Total Opportunity Score	**0.60**		**1.98**
Threats			
Intense competition among universities	0.18	2	0.36
Rapid changes in accreditation standards	0.12	2	0.24
Globalization and international competition	0.07	2	0.14
Financial uncertainty	0.03	2	0.06
Total Threat Score	**0.40**		**0.80**
Total EFAS Score	**1.00**		**2.78**

Interpretation:

The EFAS score of 2.78 indicates that UNTARA faces significant opportunities but must respond strategically to external threats, particularly competitive pressures and regulatory changes (Poniwatie et al., 2022).

SWOT Matrix Positioning

Based on the IFAS and EFAS scores, UNTARA is positioned in Quadrant I (Aggressive/Growth Strategy), indicating strong internal capabilities and favorable external opportunities.

Table 3. SWOT Matrix for UNTARA

	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
Strengths (S)	**S.O Strategies** • Optimize HR development to enhance academic quality • Expand partnerships for research and innovation • Strengthen institutional branding	**ST Strategies** • Improve governance to meet accreditation demands • Enhance graduate competitiveness through curriculum alignment
Weaknesses (W)	**WO Strategies** • Improve research productivity using external funding • Upgrade infrastructure through policy support • Accelerate digital transformation	**WT Strategies** • Strengthen internal coordination • Prioritize strategic investment • Enhance quality assurance consistency

Strategic Implications

The SWOT-based results indicate that strengthening UNTARA's competitiveness requires a strategic focus on:

1. *Human resource development* to enhance teaching and research performance.
2. *Academic quality assurance* to ensure compliance with accreditation standards.
3. *Digital transformation* to improve efficiency and service quality.
4. *Partnership expansion* to increase institutional relevance and sustainability.

Overall, the SWOT analysis demonstrates that UNTARA possesses sufficient internal strength to pursue growth-oriented strategies while addressing key weaknesses and external challenges (Wilasto & Wening, 2025).

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive framework for understanding UNTARA's competitive position and formulating strategic

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

responses to both internal and external challenges. The results indicate that UNTARA possesses relatively strong internal capabilities, particularly in institutional commitment, human resource potential, and community engagement. These strengths provide a critical foundation for enhancing competitiveness, as strong internal alignment and institutional commitment are essential to effective strategic management in higher education (Tambunan, 2020).

However, the identification of weaknesses, such as limited research productivity, inadequate infrastructure, and inconsistent quality assurance implementation, suggests that UNTARA still faces structural challenges commonly encountered by developing higher education institutions. Research output, academic facilities, and governance quality remain important determinants of institutional reputation and competitiveness. Without addressing these weaknesses, UNTARA may struggle to sustain long-term competitive advantage despite favorable external conditions (Suwarsono et al., 2022).

From an external perspective, the study reveals that UNTARA operates within an environment that offers significant opportunities, including increasing demand for higher education, supportive government policies, and rapid technological advancement. Policy support and digital transformation can provide important momentum for institutional development and capacity enhancement. The presence of such opportunities suggests that UNTARA is well-positioned to pursue growth-oriented strategies, provided internal capacities are effectively mobilized (Wahyudi et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, external threats such as intense competition, evolving accreditation standards, and globalization pressures present substantial challenges. The increasing number of higher education institutions competing for students and resources underscores the importance of differentiation and strategic positioning. In this context, SWOT analysis serves as a valuable strategic tool for identifying potential threats and supporting the development of proactive institutional responses (Prabowo, 2024).

The SWOT matrix positioning of UNTARA in Quadrant I (Strength–Opportunity) indicates that the institution should adopt an aggressive growth strategy. This strategic orientation emphasizes leveraging internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities, particularly through human resource development, partnership expansion, and digital transformation. Similar conclusions were drawn by Gürel (2017), who found that organizations with strong internal capacities and favorable external environments benefit most from proactive and innovative strategies (Ghaleb, 2024).

The proposed SO strategies, such as optimizing human resource development and strengthening academic quality assurance, are consistent with contemporary higher education management literature, which highlights the central role of faculty quality and institutional governance in enhancing competitiveness. Meanwhile, WO strategies that address research productivity and infrastructure limitations underscore the importance of aligning external support with internal improvement efforts. These strategies reinforce the argument that competitiveness is not solely determined by external conditions but by an institution's ability to respond strategically (Latief et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the ST and WT strategies emphasize the need for resilience and risk management. Strengthening governance systems and quality assurance mechanisms is essential for mitigating accreditation-related threats, while prioritizing strategic investments can help UNTARA manage financial and operational risks. Sustainable competitiveness in higher education requires continuous evaluation, organizational adaptability, and effective leadership to respond to changing environmental conditions (Taherdoost & Madanchian, 2021).

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

Overall, this discussion highlights that strengthening UNTARA's competitiveness is a multifaceted process that requires strategic integration of internal capabilities and external opportunities. The application of SWOT analysis not only provides diagnostic insights but also facilitates the formulation of actionable, contextually relevant strategies. By implementing the proposed strategies systematically and sustainably, UNTARA can enhance institutional performance, strengthen stakeholder trust, and improve its competitive position in the higher education landscape (Musarofah et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that enhancing the competitiveness of Universitas Tangerang Raya (UNTARA) requires a systematic, growth-oriented approach that strategically integrates internal capabilities with external dynamics through SWOT analysis. The findings reveal that UNTARA can leverage its core internal strengths, such as institutional commitment, capable human resources, a relevant curriculum, and strong community engagement, while actively capitalizing on external opportunities like industrial collaborations, international programs, policy support, and digital advancements. Concurrently, the institution must aggressively mitigate internal weaknesses, including limited research productivity, inadequate facilities, and inconsistent quality assurance, while navigating external threats from intense academic competition and shifting educational policies through continuous innovation and enhanced institutional branding. Ultimately, by deploying an integrated strategy that harmonizes academic quality improvements, robust partnerships, and technological adaptation, UNTARA can optimize its strategic decision-making framework to achieve sustainable development and a distinct competitive edge in an increasingly demanding higher education landscape.

The novelty of this study lies in its contextualized and integrative application of SWOT analysis to enhance the competitiveness of a developing private higher education institution, specifically UNTARA, within the Indonesian academic landscape. Moving beyond conventional descriptive SWOT approaches, this research systematically integrates qualitative stakeholder insights with weighted IFAS and EFAS matrices to deliver a rigorous, data-driven strategic framework. It contributes uniquely to the empirical literature by examining UNTARA’s distinct regional and institutional dynamics, an area previously underrepresented in strategic management studies. Furthermore, the study introduces a structured, measurable matrix that directly links internal and external factors through scoring and quadrant positioning, ensuring that the strategic recommendations are precisely aligned with contemporary challenges such as digital transformation, quality assurance reform, and stakeholder-oriented governance. The findings also imply that higher education institutions must strengthen adaptive strategic management practices to remain competitive amid rapid environmental change and increasing stakeholder expectations. In practice, institutional leaders are encouraged to improve research productivity, expand digital infrastructure, strengthen quality assurance systems, and intensify collaborative partnerships with industry and international stakeholders to support long-term institutional sustainability. Despite these contributions, this study remains limited to a single institutional context and relies primarily on qualitative assessments and stakeholder perceptions, which may restrict the broader generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate comparative institutional analyses, longitudinal approaches, and quantitative strategic performance measurements to provide a more comprehensive understanding of competitiveness

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Vol. 4 No. 2, June 2026 | E-ISSN: 2987-7407 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i2.465

strategies within higher education institutions in Indonesia and other developing countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this study entitled *"Strengthening the Competitiveness of Higher Education Institutions Through a SWOT Analysis Approach at UNTARA."* Special appreciation is extended to the academic community of Untara for their support, valuable insights, and cooperation throughout the research process. The author is also deeply grateful to supervisors, colleagues, and all respondents who generously shared their time and information. Finally, the author acknowledges the support of family and friends whose encouragement and motivation made this work possible. May this study contribute meaningfully to the development and competitiveness of higher education institutions.

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