

Marketing Public Relations Strategies Affecting the Decision to Study in the MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to study the effectiveness of Marketing Public Relations (MPR) strategies in influencing the decision of prospective students to study in the MBA Program in Global Business Management of the Graduate School of Commerce-Burapha University. The research used mixed methodologies to collect qualitative and quantitative data. A group of 20 key informants were selected for collecting qualitative data, and 400 respondents were selected in collecting quantitative data. Qualitative data were obtained through a use of in-depth interviews, and it was found out that the problems and needs of public relations to effectively market the MBA program comprised of 4 principal areas: budget, human resource, management and curriculum. It also showed that there were 6 areas of MPR strategies: target group, objectives of public relations, channels, styles, contents and values. Moreover, it also showed that there were 3 major factors that influenced decision-making: impression of the program, worthiness to personal/professional pursuit, and appropriate tuition fees. Quantitative data collected shows that the effectiveness of MPR strategies was at a moderate level, which included a use of online media, personal media, billboard, social responsibility, community involvement, publications, identity media, and news. The decision-making dimension received moderate score in average, and it included lobbying activities, needs for enrolling in Chinese Studies major, ASEAN Studies major, Europe Studies major, and evening classes or weekend classes. Furthermore, it also showed that MPR strategies plays an important role in the

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prospective students' decision in enrolling in the MBA in Global Business Management Program of the Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University with R Square value equivalent to 69.90 percent.

Keywords: Marketing Public Relations, Decision to study, MBA Program, Global Business Management

Introduction

Education is crucial for developing human capital while serving as a foundation for other dimensions of development. It helps people adjust themselves to the rapid and constant changes of environments. Education makes people knowledgeable with increased capabilities and become a major force for national development. (Rattanamanee, A., 2010) Education also makes the development of a nation achievable and sustainable. A person with high educational qualifications has more opportunities for professional promotion, not to mention personal satisfaction that goes with it. The Ministry of Education therefore establishes the goals of education which lead to peace, well-being, job opportunities and competitiveness against other countries. The quality of education must be enhanced in order to increase potentials and capabilities of the population. (Central Regional Institute for Non-Formal and Informal Education, 2012)

Both private and public universities are competing against one another by providing graduate programs as a showcase of academic competencies. (Bureau of Higher Education Standards and Evaluation, Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 2010, pp. 1-46) These graduate programs are offered as a daytime program and an evening program. They are usually categorized as either normal, special or international program. New programs are also introduced every now and then so as to attract more enrollments. In addition, many universities also offer graduate programs in their provincial campuses. If they do not have provincial campuses, they usually collaborate with local universities to offer graduate programs. It can be said that interested students can now easily enroll in graduate programs, which are



now widely available throughout the country as compared to the previous era. (Meesuk P. & Teerakul S., 2008)

Nowadays, both private and public universities are facing more and more challenges while the number of students is decreasing. For those who come from wealthy families, they prefer to study abroad. Moreover, well-known universities from foreign countries have likewise established their own campuses in Thailand or in a neighboring ASEAN country. Further, the internet has also given birth to online courses using virtual learning instead of face-to-face meeting. The false value given to the educational degree has resulted in too many graduates of some fields that cannot meet the needs of the job market. (Chaisrisawatsuk W., 2016) Some business sectors has stepped into the education providing the courses to develop their bachelor and graduate students to address their needs. Therefore, it can be noticed that graduate programs could not find the linkage between the demand and the supply. (Dhammasaccakarn W. et al., 2019)

The Graduate School of Commerce (GSC), Burapha University offers a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program as one of its post graduate programs. It was opened in the year 1995 and in 2011, the MBA in Global Business Management (GBM) was added as a specialization. The program's mission is to develop professionals who are knowledgeable, skilled, able to think critically, analytically, synthetically and creatively through integration of systematic and effective business management with considerations on challenging contexts of the digital age. The courses provided in the program were developed in response to the context of the world in the 4.0 era, in which innovation has become the major challenge to globalization both in terms of policy, laws, regulations and economic and social changes. The practice of global business management has to be more innovative in response to the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) development plan. (Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University, 2011, 2016)

An MBA with a specialization in global management allows students to focus on the specialty area of international business. Moreover, the GBM program of Burapha University aims to develop human resources to be globally competitive, particularly those in the eastern region of Thailand. It prepares students to embrace social and cultural changes in the 4th Industrial



Revolution, which is known as the 4.0 era or the digital age. In 2020, the curriculum was revised to meet the needs of social sectors and private businesses. The revision was made in collaboration with universities from Thailand and other countries, representatives from the government and private sectors, and those from member countries of ASEAN. An effective academic system was established in order to develop graduates' competitiveness and make them responsive to the changing social structure of the aging society, inequality, increasing online network, digital economy, cultural diversity and EEC development plan set forth by the Eastern Special Economic Development Zone Act B.E. 2561 (2018), which covers the eastern provinces of Thailand, namely Chonburi, Chachoengsao and Rayong. All these challenges have impacts on implementation of the government sector, business operation of private businesses and consumer's behaviors. (Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University, 2021)

The MBA in Global Business Management was envisioned to respond to the development plan of EEC. However, the changing social context influencing decision-making of potential students might result in a crisis, hence, immediate solutions are needed to confront the problems besieging the program. (Pittiyanuwat S., 2016) Among the major problems being encountered by the program are:

- (a) intense competition and
- (b) decreased number of students.

The researcher therefore would like to study the Marketing Public Relations strategies that have impacts on the decision to study in MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University. Likewise, the researcher would also like to identify effective strategies for Marketing Public Relations of the program.

Research objectives

1. To study the problems and needs for marketing public relations of the MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University
2. To determine the relationship between personal factors and decision making for enrolling in the MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University



3. To identify the marketing public relations strategies that affect decision making for enrolling in the MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University

Research Hypothesis

1. Different personal factors of prospective students have impacts on their decision making to be enrolled in the MBA in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University

2. Marketing Public Relations strategies have impacts on decision-making to be enrolled in the MBA in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University

Literature review

Literature reviews for MPR Strategies Affecting the Decision to Study in MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University are as follows;

1. Concepts of Marketing Public Relations

Marketing Public Relations (MPR) is strategic plan for public relations aiming to support marketing to provide trustworthy information, promote purchase decision and aftersales satisfaction through various communication strategies. Therefore, MPR is public relations strategies to support marketing. It has become famous particularly in the age of borderless communication. The consumer's behaviors have changed rapidly. Marketers have to develop and adjust strategies for public relations to respond to such changes. The strategies are classified into proactive MPR and reactive MPR. The former is highly indispensable in highly competitive marketing. The approach focuses on creating marketing opportunity to achieve goals rather than solving problems. The reactive MPR involves communication to handle with problem affecting corporate image and reputation; crisis management; and rumor control.

Kotler P. (1999) A marketing guru, suggested the instruments for marketing public relations with the acronym "P E N C I L S", which stands for;



P = Publication such as magazines, annual reports and brochures

E = Events refers to special events such as sponsoring sporting, cultural events, and business events

N = News refers to press releases about corporate, product or staff through media

C = Community Involvement Activities refers to activities aiming to build relations with the local community

I = Identity Media refers to particular media that contributes to define the identity of the company such as stationary, business card, letterhead and corporate clothes

L = Lobbying Activity refers to activities aiming to promote measures or regulations favorable to the business and counteract those unfavorable

S = Social Responsibility refers to initiatives that testify to the Corporate Social Responsibility which can bring reputation to the organization

2. Concepts and theories on consumer decision-making

Bangmo S. (2012) defined decision-making as to choose different practices in order to achieve the identified goals. Decision-making involves consideration on one or many issues at the same time.

Schiffman G. & Kanuk L. (1994) defined consumer decision making as “the process of making purchase decision based on cognitive and emotional influences. Factors influencing decision-making of each consumer differ which can be grouped as follows;

1. Internal factors such as (a) need, want and desire for product or service (b) motivation that influences individual to find solution to the problem (c) personality (d) attitude which is how individual evaluates emotion or opinion towards the issue (e) perception is how individual perceive other's action or thought (f) experience refers to learning or change of behavior based on perception and experience that can endure for a long time.

2. External factors include (a) economy (b) family in which different family background will result in different decision-making (c) society (d) culture (e) business contact or opportunity for consumer to perceive the product (f) environment such as climate variability, water or fuel scarcity that can have impact on consumer decision-making.



Patterns of consumer decision-making are similar to the 5 steps of purchase decision which are: (Sukto N., 2014)

1. Problem or Need Recognition is when the consumer recognizes a need or problem and feels a difference between the actual state and some desired state. They try to find solution to satisfy such needs. The problem of individual differs and can be summarized as follows;

Depletion of the stock of goods leads to necessity to replace it with new stock of goods.

Dissatisfaction or discontentment with the stock happens when a consumer faces problem with the product.

Individual development both physically, mentally and professionally.

Changes in the environmental characteristics such as changes to family status including marriage, having a child or divorce affect needs for the product or the service.

Changes in the financial status both in a positive and a negative way will have effects of ways of life.

Changes to reference group can have impact of the consumer's behavior and decision-making.

Promotional activities including advertisement, public relations, promotions (discount, reward, freebie, and bundle), direct sales or marketing can trigger drives in consumers.

2. Search for information happens when a consumer recognizes his need. The consumer might or might not be able to find the solution. If the need is not critical, it might not be addressed at all. In contrast, if the need becomes more heightened or stressful, it might trigger consumer to search for information from different sources including personal, commercial, public and experimental sources.

3. Evaluation of alternative happens when the consumer has the information in hand. The consumer proceeds to alternative evaluation and make decision on the best choice by comparing attributes, benefits, degree of importance, brand beliefs and utility function of the product. There are many different models regarding alternative evaluations including Dominance Model, Conjunctive Decision Model, Disjunctive Model, Lexicographic Model, Expectancy-Value Model and Ideal Product Model or Ideal Point Model.



4. Decision making requires information and time duration at some extents which differ for each product. The levels of involvement can be categorized as (a) extended problem solving (b) limited problem solving (c) routinized response behavior (d) immediate response behavior, and (e) variety seeking behavior

5. Post-purchase behavior is the stage when the consumer receives experiences from the consumption which can be satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The buyer decision process denotes 6 areas for considerations including (a) product selection based on the product characteristics, quality, style, color, size or packages; (b) brand selection including quality assurance, award or any credential; (c) service selection based on how the service is provided, key service, accessory, sales warranty; (d) marketplace which must be trustworthy, convenient and pleasant; (e) service terms and conditions; and (f) payment method which differs among consumers. Some of them prefer to pay in cash while the others choose other payment methods such as installment or credit card. (Kotler P., 2002)

According to the literature review, in terms of decision-making, the target group choose to receive the information from different public relation media. They tend to consider the details of the program to determine if it responds to their needs, the innovative instructional system, fame of the institutes, convenience of the services, facilities and technology used, the pleasant environment, fully-equipped classroom, appropriate cost and options of payment.

Research methodology

The research applied mixed methodology to receive both qualitative and quantitative data. The population and sampling for qualitative data were 20 stakeholders of the MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University, including alumni, current students, lecturers, employers of graduate students and the social sector. The population and sampling for quantitative data were 400 employees working in multinational corporations in the eastern industrial estates. The sample size was determined by Cochran's (1977) formula to achieve the confidence level of 95%. The quota sampling technique was applied based on the ratio of number of factories located in the eastern industrial estates in Chonburi, Chachoengsao and Rayong.



The research tool for the qualitative data is an in-depth interview form. On the other hand, a structured questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data. The IOC (Index of Consistency) index mean of expert scores were more than 0.67 for every item. The reliability of the instrument was determined by applying Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, which was equivalent to 0.87 by trying out the questionnaire with the respondents similar to the population and the sampling of the research; they were 30 employees in Hi-Tech Kabinburi industrial estate.

The researcher collected the field data from the interviews with the stakeholders of the program. Interviews were scheduled by appointment through telephone and Line messaging. Information gathered through written materials and audio recording were transcribed and sent back to the informants to verify their accuracy. In case of incomplete data, the researcher conducted another interview with the informants until reaching data saturation. For the questionnaire method, the researcher received assistance from the human resource department of the industrial estates in Chonburi, Chachoengsao and Rayong. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed to the employees according to the established ratio. In case of incomplete questionnaires, a new one would be sent for completion.

The contents of the qualitative data were thoroughly analyzed. Similar statements or sentences were grouped to determine the thematic summaries. Each statement was encoded. The keywords were then grouped into themes and sub-themes before comprehensively describing the phenomena and presenting the findings in tables, illustrations and explanation. The quantitative data were analyzed with statistical programs. The statistics used for the analysis included frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, one-way analysis of variance and multiple linear regression analysis.

Research results

The analysis of the qualitative data from the interview with 20 stakeholders can be summarized as follows;

1. The problems and needs for public relations of MBA Program comprises of 5 areas which are (a) limited budget, (b) insufficient and incompetent human resource, (c) management lacking public relations planning, (d) curriculum which are rarely publicized and unknown to the



target group, (e) other problems including involvement with government, private, social sectors, mass media, existing students, alumni, lecturers and staff in promoting the program continually.

2. There are 6 areas of concerns of public relations for marketing strategies, which are:

2.1 Most of the informants have never received public relations media of the program. Although the information contained in the PR media was comprehensive, they are not accessible. So as to increase effectiveness of the MPR, it was suggested that the program should do the following (a) establish systematic public relations plan, (b) clearly identify the target group and (c) communicate with the target client widely and regularly.

2.2 MPR of the program must set the objectives for the public relations such as: (a) to provide knowledge and understanding, (b) to promote positive attitude, (c) to promote positive image of the organization, (d) to impress the public, (e) to boost sales and marketing, (f) to solve problems and difficulties and (g) to seek collaboration and support from internal and external parties. To achieve the goals of the MBA program, the informants suggested that the Graduate School of Commerce should set clearer objectives.

2.3 Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University has applied various channels for public relations including television, radio, newspaper, brochure, leaflet, billboard, identity media, online media, personal media of referral, special events and Corporate Social Responsibility activities with the communities. As per data collected from the informants, the following were found to be the most effective: online media, referral and billboard in that order.

2.4 The informants pointed out that the program should apply various styles of public relations strategies including text, audio, visual and mixed styles. The public relations styles can be in the form of narration, description, persuasion, explanation, discussion, photo release, radio, Clubhouse, Podcast, visual media, YouTube video and event marketing.

2.5 The informants emphasized that the contents of a public relations media were very important. They suggested that: (a) the contents should be presented in a story telling pattern, (b) there should be articles presenting important information, (c) the contents should feature interviews with important public figures about issues that caught the attention of the



public, (d) there should be documentaries about the topic of interest among the target group or the areas of expertise of the program, (e) the photographs should be attractive and must grab the attention of the target audience, (f) the audio should be presented by an attractive, clear and powerful voice which could be easily understood and not boring or annoying, (g) the contents must be connected to the target audience, (h) the contents should recap the previous episode and mention the following ones so that the target audience could easily follow and understand the succeeding episode, (i) the contents must denote recent and up-to-date phenomena and (j) the contents should not focus on sales but instead should focus on core Thai values.

2.6 The informants thought that the program's MPR strategies should create values by adhering to: (a) accuracy; (b) balance of information based on the 5W's H principle, namely Who, What, Where, When, Why and How; (c) objectivity; (d) clarification and concise language; (e) valuable, ethical and integral information.

3. The informants emphasized that the major factors influencing decision-making to study in the MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University were (a) the curriculum was thought-provoking. (b) knowledge gained from the program could be applied in the work and their business. (c) tuition fees were appropriate.

The analysis of the quantitative data showed that most of the samplings were females: 209 out of the 400 informants were female with their ages ranging from 26 to 35 years. They were either supervisors or departmental managers. Their salaries ranged between 35,001 and 45,000 baht. Most of them were interested in studying in MBA Program in Global Business Management, as shown by a positive response rate of 68.00 percent. The MPR strategies received moderate scores ($\bar{X} = 3.05$), which could be put in order as follows; 1) Online media ($\bar{X} = 4.08$), 2) personal media ($\bar{X} = 3.08$), 3) billboard ($\bar{X} = 3.07$), 4) corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities ($\bar{X} = 3.02$), 5) community involvement activities ($\bar{X} = 3.01$), 6) publications ($\bar{X} = 3.01$), 7) identity media ($\bar{X} = 2.99$), and 8) press release ($\bar{X} = 2.93$). Needs for studying in the program received moderate scores ($\bar{X} = 2.96$), which could be put in order as follows; 1) willingness to refer the program to acquaintances ($\bar{X} = 3.07$), 2) needs for studying



in Chinese Studies major ($\bar{X} = 2.97$), 3) needs for studying in ASEAN Studies major ($\bar{X} = 2.97$), 4) needs for studying in European Studies major ($\bar{X} = 2.96$), 5) needs for studying in evening classes ($\bar{X} = 2.95$), 6) needs for studying in weekend classes ($\bar{X} = 2.95$), and 7) needs for studying in regular weekday classes ($\bar{X} = 2.88$). MPR strategies had impacts on decision-making to study in the program: R Square value was equivalent to 69.90percent as shown in Table 1 as follows;

Table1 Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Standardize						
	Unstandardized Coefficients		d Coefficients	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Constant	.228	.146		1.559	.120		
X_1	.105	.042	.116	2.506	.013*	.614	1.630
X_2	.019	.045	.021	.431	.666	.572	1.748
X_3	.121	.043	.135	2.797	.005*	.562	1.780
X_4	.116	.047	.124	2.475	.014*	.520	1.923
X_5	.081	.040	.095	2.041	.042*	.599	1.669
X_6	.088	.035	.104	2.504	.013*	.761	1.314
X_7	.191	.050	.189	3.813	.000*	.533	1.877
X_8	.175	.049	.180	3.580	.000*	.519	1.928
R Square				.699			
Durbin-Watson				1.997			
F-ratio				46.795	(0.000*)		

* P-value<0.05

When \hat{Y} = decision-making to study in MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University, X_1 =MPR by using publications, X_2 =MPR by using news, X_3 =MPR by using community involvement, X_4 = MPR by using identity media, X_5



=MPR by using social responsibility activities, X_6 = MPR by using billboard, X_7 = MPR by using online media, and X_8 = MPR by using personal media

Table1 presents results of Multiple Linear Regression. It was found that there was no multicollinearity with a tolerance between 0.05-0.1; VIF of every variable was less than 10, Durbin-Watson was equivalent to 1.97, R Square was equivalent to 69.90, F statistics was equivalent to 46.79, and Sig. Was equivalent to 0.00. This demonstrated that at least 1 strategy of MPR strategies could predict the variation of decision making to study in MBA Program in Global Business Management, Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University. The equation of multiple linear regression is as follows;

$$\text{Unstandardized } \hat{Y} = .228 + .105(X_1)^* + .019(X_2) + .121(X_3)^* + .116(X_4)^* + .081(X_5) + .088(X_6)^* + .191(X_7)^* + .175(X_8)^*$$

$$\text{Standardized } \hat{Y} = .116(X_1)^* + .021(X_2) + .135(X_3)^* + .124(X_4)^* + .095(X_5) + .104(X_6)^* + .189(X_7)^* + .180(X_8)^*$$

Conclusion Discussion and Recommendations

The results of the study show that the problems and needs for public relations of MBA Program include budget, human resource, management, curriculum, and others (including involvement with government, private, social sectors, mass media, existing students, alumni, lecturers and staff). This is consistent with the concept proposed by Laphirattanakul W. (2010). Effective management of public relations should be duties of all parties in the organization. It requires collaboration between the front and the back offices. In addition, Arunrat Chinaworn (2010) mentioned that the implementation of public relations should consider different factors such as human resources, budget, materials, and management. This is also consistent with the research findings of The Needs and Approach of Public Relations Communication Via Internet for the Personnel of Mahidol University's Office of the President conducted by Buasrijun M. & Bangthamai E. (2016). The results yielded that the method for developing communication needed connectivity among all departments. The communication must be fast with no overlapping of data. The departments must be proactive and should develop their members' skills, including screening information for its accuracy and presenting the information promptly



and interestingly. Moreover, the research on Guidelines Management for Graduate Studies in the 21st Century conducted by Prabyai S. et al. (2020) proposed the integration of technology in supporting instruction. Applications and social media could be applied to develop communication infrastructure for supporting life-long learning. The technology could be applied as medium for communication between instructors and learners. Learning resources management system should be established in order that the learning can be accessed anywhere. The curriculum should focus on providing knowledge and expertise in professional fields. Entrepreneurs should get involved in developing students' skills while innovation should be applicable both in the present and the future. There should be interdisciplinary studies to create innovations and values. The program must be aligned with the qualification frameworks and professionalism. The curriculum must respond to the contexts of Thai society and culture as well as global community. Social and cultural considerations must be integrated in the teaching through different learning activities. Different languages and cultures must be promoted and studied. This is also consistent with the research conducted by Tothamcharean P. (2012), which found that the students decided to study in the program because of the course presentation, instructors and the curriculum that matched their needs.

The results yielded that there are 6 areas of public relations for marketing strategies including target group, objectives of the public relations, channels, styles, contents and values. This is consistent with the research conducted by Kerdsonsri P. & Phannan P. (2020). The public relations strategies via online media comprises of 14 Cs including (a) clear message-clear communication to the target audience, (b) consideration – the content needed to be reliable, (c) consistency of the communication message, (d) confidence, (e) continuity of the communication message, (f) condensed content of the communication message, (g) communication tools should be chosen properly, (h) communication tactics, (i) corporate social responsibility (CSR), (j) comparison communication tools with one another, (k) creativity, (l) competitiveness, (m) corroboration with thought leaders, and (n) conciseness of public relations strategies using online media.

The research revealed that MPR



MPR strategies scores were at a moderate level in average, which were in the following order: (a) online media, (b) personal media, (c) billboard, (d) social responsibility, (e) community involvement, (f) publications, (g) identity media, and (h) news. The results from the interviews also revealed that online media of the back-office staff could promote awareness among the target group which received the highest scores. It was followed by the lecturers' online pages, alumni and existing students and others. This is consistent with the research conducted by Wannaphapha T. (2017). It was found that the students used various online media to search for information when they were making decisions on studies including website, Facebook and university's fan page.

The research revealed that personal media could convince the target group to make decisions more easily. In addition, it was also found that referrals from acquaintances and influencers had great impacts on decision-making to study. This is consistent with the research conducted by Oonprechavanich T. & Yuphuang C. (2017), which described that personal media played an important role for the program's public relations, including the counseling teachers, educators, famous alumni, sport players, cheer leaders and scholarship students. Therefore, in order to promote and convince the target group to study in the program, alumni and existing students should give advices to prospect students because they could provide information about the curriculum, the courses, the lecturers, the tuition fees and other issues in details to the target group before making decisions.

The research revealed that some applicants received information about the program from vinyl or cloth banners in the university, the industrial estates and the billboard along the roadsides. The billboard was at its disadvantage because it was difficult to spot by people. This is consistent with the research conducted by Tonginthaarach M. & Gulid N. (2018). It was found that traditional advertisement media were less effective; therefore, new technologies should be integrated. The presentation should be innovative applying light and sound to attract attention and convince prospects' purchase decision-making.

The research revealed that brochures and leaflets had advantages because they could provide detailed information which promoted understanding of the presented information. Newspaper and journals should focus on building corporate image. This is consistent with the



research conducted by Tawornnitikul S. (2014). It was found that printing MPR media accessed by the learners included brochure and leaflets. In addition, Kheerajit, C. et al (2016) pointed out that publication was another channel for searching information about the curriculum, faculties, the university and courses provided. It could provide information about the curriculum to the target group in details.

The research revealed that socially responsible activities and community involvement activities of the university including art and cultural conservation, merit-making, environmental conservation and other social services as well as community outreach programs by the students such as garbage collecting, environmental conscious projects in the university and surrounding communities built positive image of the program. It also built good relationship between the College and the communities. This is consistent with the research conducted by Niyomrath K. (2010). It was found that the marketing strategies had to be reselected according to the changing contexts of the society, environment and consumer's behaviors. This was because the consumers were prone to buy socially and environmentally concerned products. The research also revealed that community involvement activities should be promoted and encouraged by the College. It should be organized continually. This is aligned with the concept proposed by Surasonthi K. (2014). It was mentioned that public relations was to communicate messages to build mutual understanding or consensus on ideas or ideologies in the society. It was to promote good image of the corporate. Therefore, the College should promote and encourage community involvement activities for the surrounding communities.

The research revealed that online media, personal media, community involvement, billboard, publications, identity media and CSR activities had impacts on decision-making to study in the program. This is consistent with the research conducted by Sampatpong P. (2013). It was found that the MPR had relations with decision-making to study in the bachelor degree program. This is also aligned with the research conducted by Tawornnitikul S. (2014). It was found that various public relations media had impacts on decision-making to study in international universities. In addition, it is also correspondent with the research conducted by Panyama P. (2012). It was found that personal media influenced decision-making at the highest degree. It was followed by online media and adhoc media.



New Knowledge from research

The research results can contribute in MPR strategic planning for the program which yields 10 phases including (a) Research and Analysis (b) MPR Planning and Management (c) Crisis management (d) Marketing public relations audience (e) Media relations (f) Lobbying (g) Corporate communications (h) Producing publicity (i) Identifying activities and Media production and (j) Implementing marketing public relations. For successful MPR planning, the following areas should be considered; (a) appropriateness of activities, contents, styles and idea which should be aligned to the organizational goals so that they can promote strength, reduce weakness and increase opportunity (b) feasibility of the approach investigating budget, technology and resources of the corporate. In case of limited resources, external experts and tools can be acquired. (c) acceptance of target group (d) trustworthiness of the activities which will promote recognition, understanding, positive attitude, trust, confidence and royalty in the brand or the organization (e) awareness among target group through timely and widely communication and activities (f) costs of the activities should be at minimum or none (g) censorship to suppress and control news, activities, contents, styles, time and space according to the corporate plans.

Recommendations for policy

1. The program should employ highly effective MPR strategies which can easily reach the target group in a consistent and timely manner. Further, two-way communication channels should be made involving MBA program managers and the target group to create better interaction.
2. The contents for MPR should be planned carefully in order to create brand awareness and immediate decision-making for prospective students. The contents should not focus on sales but instead should put an emphasis on values to the target group.
3. Personified media should be used for MPR, particularly the alumni, existing students and intellectual leaders as endorsers for promoting and attracting the target group to apply to be enrolled in the program.



4. Billboards should be modern, innovative and attractive to easily catch the attention of target group. It should be large and strategically placed in areas accessible by the public.

Recommendations for a future research

1. Needs of students in the MBA program should be identified and examined so as to determine the appropriate instructional styles and course offerings which are responsive to their needs.
2. Digital marketing and innovative contents on the social media of the program should be studied to attract prospect students.

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