

Marketing Strategies Influencing Decision Making for Private University in Bangkok

Ntapat Worapongpat^{a*}

^{a*} Educational Innovation Institute,
Alternative Education Association, Thailand
E-mail: dr.thiwat@gmail.com

Article Info
Received 19 December 2022
Revised 27 December 2022
Accepted 28 December 2022
Available online 29 April 2023

Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the marketing strategies employed by private universities in Thailand that influence students' decision to enroll in the Faculty of Education of private universities located in Bangkok. This study employed a mixed research design and collected data using questionnaires and structured interviews. The sample size included 400 students and 6 administrators from private universities, selected through simple random sampling with proportional allocation. The data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations. Additionally, t-tests, F-tests, and Song Pearson simple correlation coefficients were used for comparisons.

The findings revealed that the marketing strategy related to undergraduate course management or product marketing is of paramount importance. Moreover, it is seen as a means of encouraging graduates to pursue a master's degree and apply their knowledge to real-world work. Along with standardized course management, graduates also consider the reputation of the university's founder, the quality of professors, the image of the institution, the teaching tools, and the variety of disciplines available. Conversely, less significant marketing strategies include location strategy, promotional activities such as grants and installments for tuition, and pricing strategies. The latter has the least influence on the decision-making process for undergraduate and graduate studies.

Keywords: Marketing Strategies, Influencing Decision Making, Private University in Bangkok

Introduction

Currently, there is an urgent need for the supervision and development of graduate quality in Thailand across all relevant sectors. The education sector must strive to produce graduates that meet the demands of the labor market and other industries. Ensuring the quality assurance of graduates is vital both domestically and internationally for four reasons. Firstly, there is a significant variation in the quality of graduates among higher education institutions and graduate schools, which can have a negative impact on Thailand's overall reputation in the long term. Secondly, there is fierce competition in the quality of education management and graduate quality both nationally and globally. Thirdly, undergraduate institutions need to develop knowledge that is recognized internationally. Lastly, undergraduate institutions must

be able to provide social assurance that they are capable of producing quality graduates. (Nadda Kanjananont, 2019)

According to a survey conducted on the employment status of 5,693 Thammasat University graduates between August 2021 and May 2022, 71.33% (3,643 individuals) secured employment, 27.14% (1,386) continued their graduate studies, and 1.53% (78) remained unemployed. The remaining 33% had other reasons for not seeking employment or further education. (Yomchinda, T., Yomchinda, L., & Takgawitoonsak, N., 2018)

The aforementioned statistics indicate a growing trend among graduates to pursue advanced studies, driven by the expanding labor market in ASEAN that places great emphasis on quality labor, particularly in English language proficiency, which is the primary communication medium in ASEAN. Consequently, Thai universities face stiff competition from regional competitors such as Singapore and Malaysia, which are better equipped and prepared in English language proficiency. Failure to update the curriculum may cause the standards of Thai education to lag behind international competitors. It is imperative that educational institutions focus on improving the quality of education as their graduates will shape the future of the country. Public universities must adapt to the challenges of autonomy and provide quasi-business services to promote flexibility and freedom of management. In this regard, employing marketing strategies to attract new graduates is a critical goal and a strategic management priority for state universities. (Ratnatthanon Onchuun & Saipin Panthong, 2021)

The objective of this research is to study and develop effective marketing strategies for private universities in Bangkok, with a focus on influencing prospective students to enroll in the Faculty of Education at Bangkok Thonburi University. The study aims to identify the needs and expectations of prospective students, as well as their desired outcomes from studying at Bangkok Thonburi University in order to apply their knowledge for future success.

Objective

To study about the marketing strategies of Bangkok Thonburi University affecting the decision to study in the Faculty of Education, Bangkok Thonburi University in Bangkok.

Practical use

Bangkok Thonburi University and related agencies can use the results of this study as a guideline in creating a marketing strategy for the institution to influence student decision making.

Definition of Terms

1. Developing a marketing strategy involves identifying lucrative opportunities and creating a comprehensive marketing plan that encompasses the 7 Ps of marketing: product, price, process, people, physical evidence, location, and promotion.

2. Strategic service management involves incorporating essential marketing tools into the marketing mix to enhance the service delivery of a service-oriented business. This includes improving internal marketing, ensuring service quality, and establishing differentiation from competitors.

3. Public relations entails fostering positive relationships and mutual understanding between an organization or institution and its stakeholders. This can be achieved by leveraging mass media platforms such as television, radio, newspapers, as well as participating in events and exhibitions, with a focus on achieving key performance indicators (KPIs).

4. The marketing mix encompasses several factors that influence students' decision-making, including:

4.1 Product: This includes the quality of education provided, the variety of academic programs offered, student facilities (such as air-conditioned classrooms, modern libraries, and computer services), the reputation of the institution, the number of graduates, and the institution's trustworthiness, as evaluated by the Office of Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (OBEC). Additionally, the ability of graduates to succeed in the workforce and receive recognition for their entrepreneurial skills are also important.

4.2 Price: This refers to the tuition fees for all courses offered by the institution.

4.3 Place: This refers to the location of the university, including the convenience, safety, and availability of parking spaces.

4.4 Promotion: This encompasses the methods used by the university to disseminate information and news to external parties, such as advertising and public relations.

4.5 Process: This relates to the service management process and ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty to the institution.

4.6 People: This refers to the knowledge, abilities, and credibility of the employees of the institution.

4.7 Physical presentation: This includes aspects that are visible to the customer, such as color, shape, packaging, and the overall atmosphere of the institution.

5. A student in this context refers to an individual who has enrolled in a bachelor's degree program at Bangkok Thonburi University for the academic year of 2021.

Research Methodology

To conduct a research study on the marketing strategies employed by private universities in Bangkok to attract students to their Faculty of Education programs, the following six steps can be taken:

The first step involves conducting a thorough review of relevant theories and research papers on the marketing strategies of private universities. This will help in creating a conceptual framework for the study.

The second step is to summarize the findings from the review of literature and create a conceptual framework that will guide the research.

The third step is to develop questionnaires as research tools, using the conceptual framework as a guide.

The fourth step is to identify the population and sample to collect research data, and to collect and analyze the data.

The fifth step is to prepare a research summary that outlines the main findings of the study.

The sixth and final step is to develop and disseminate marketing strategies that can be used by private universities in the Bangkok area to attract students to their Faculty of Education programs.

Population and Sample

1. Population: The population for this research study is divided into two groups:

1) Students who graduated with a bachelor's degree in the academic year 2021 from public and private institutions under the Ministry of Interior. The total population is 658,135.

2) High-level personnel of private educational institutes, including project administrators and faculty members.

2. Samples: The samples for this research study are divided into two groups:

1) 400 students who graduated with a bachelor's degree in the academic year 2021 from six universities in Bangkok and its vicinity. The universities included are Bangkok Thonburi University, North Bangkok University, Sripatum University, Shinawatra University, Thonburi University, and Pathum Thani University. The pre-sampling method of Bangkok Thonburi University was used to select the sample.

2) High-level personnel of six private educational institutes, including rectors, academic vice presidents, committee members, and program directors. A specific random sampling method was used to select six individuals from each institute. The institutions were asked to recommend individuals who could provide the most information. The institutes included are Bangkok Thonburi University, North Bangkok University, Sripatum University, Shinawatra University, Thonburi University, and Pathum Thani University.

Research Tools

This research utilized a questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, with a total of 73 questions divided into 9 sections as follows:

Section 1: 9 questions regarding the individuals involved in creating the marketing strategy.

Section 2: 14 questions regarding Product Strategy.

Section 3: 6 questions regarding Pricing Strategies.

Section 4: 15 questions regarding Placement Strategies.

Section 5: 16 questions regarding Marketing Promotion Strategies.

Section 6: 6 questions regarding Process Strategies.

Section 7: 4 questions regarding People Strategy.

Section 8: 5 questions regarding Physical Presentation Strategies.

Section 9: 2 questions for Additional Ideas and Suggestions.

The Hypothesis of The Study

Based on a review of literature and related research, the study hypothesis can be formulated as:

1. Marketing strategies have a positive impact on students' satisfaction with their choice of university for study.

2. The various marketing strategies employed by private universities in Bangkok have differing effects on students' decision-making processes.

Research Findings

The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire completed by 400 graduating students in the academic year 2021 from six private universities in Bangkok and its vicinity, under the Ministry of Interior. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and F-test were used for data analysis, along with the Song Pearson simple correlation coefficient. The study's data analysis and research interpretation were divided into four parts.

Part 1 analyzed the importance of individuals in creating marketing strategies for private universities in Bangkok, and the hypothesis tested was that the Executive Committee's average level of importance in creating marketing strategies was high. The study found that the

most influential people were the rector, while the academic administrative staff had the least strategic role.

Part 2 analyzed students' opinions on factors affecting their decision to enroll in a private university in Bangkok, and the hypothesis tested was that the mean level of importance of these factors and strategies was high. The study found that the product strategy, including the founder's reputation and the number of PhD students, was the most important factor, followed by pricing strategy, including tuition fees and educational support. The study also found that the travel convenience factor, modern library, and beauty of the school were important in formulating a marketing strategy.

Part 3 summarized the students' opinions on the importance of factors in each strategy affecting their decision to enroll in a private university in Bangkok. There was no difference in opinions between the central region and the metropolitan area.

Part 4 used factor analysis in each strategy to identify relationships and grouping factors. For the product strategy, the study found three factors: success and policy, reputation and employees, and the number of students in each educational level.

Overall, the study provided insights into the factors influencing students' decisions to enroll in private universities in Bangkok and highlighted the importance of product and pricing strategies in creating effective marketing strategies.

Discussion

The data analysis results are presented in six parts.

Part 1 examined the importance of individuals involved in formulating marketing strategies for a private university in Bangkok. The findings indicate that all levels of personnel play a crucial role in creating such strategies, with two levels of importance - very important and important. The Rector, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dean were identified as the most influential individuals, while administrative staff were deemed least influential. These results align with a study by Ratnatthanon Onchuen & Saipin Panthong (2021) on factors affecting the decision to enroll in private education schools.

Section 2 analyzed student opinions on factors influencing the decision to study in a private university in Bangkok, based on 7 strategies: product, price, location, promotion, people, process, and physical presentation. The results showed that the most influential factors were related to product strategy, such as the reputation of the institution, the teacher, and the image of the institution. Ease of travel was identified as the most important strategy. The most effective marketing promotion strategies were scholarships and tuition installments, while the most influential pricing strategies were tuition and education support fees. The importance of adapting teaching and learning methods to the situation was also highlighted. These results are consistent with previous studies by Muangmee, C. et al. (2021) and Maneerat Iad Ngamsom & Sasanan Wiwatthanachart (2020).

Part 3 compared opinions on factors influencing marketing strategies between students in central and regional regions and found no significant differences in their views. This corresponds to a study by Limrung Yuenyong & Narong Rit (2017) on factors affecting the decision to choose a study plan for arts and music at the secondary level of schools in Bangkok. The aim of this study was to create strategies to promote service marketing.

Part 4 of the study involved factor analysis of each strategy through correlation and grouping of factors. The results showed that the product strategy could be divided into two groups: policy and achievement, as well as image and reputation. Price and location strategies were not categorized into any groups, while promotion strategies were grouped into two categories - communication to create awareness and promotion. These findings are consistent with a previous study by Maneerat Iad Ngamsom & Sasanan Wiwatthanachart (2020).

In Part 5, the study tested the hypothesis that different marketing strategies of private universities in Bangkok would have varying effects on students' decision-making. The results revealed that the product strategy had the greatest influence on decision making, followed by location strategies and marketing promotion strategies in descending order of influence. The price strategy was found to have the least impact on decision making, which aligns with Songpol Soontrakul's findings. These results are also consistent with a recent study by Phophangphum, N. & Trisang, S. (2022).

Suggestion

The competition among universities and colleges in Bangkok is becoming more intense, with private universities not only competing against each other but also against public institutions such as Rajabhat University, which has been upgraded to university status. Public universities have the advantage of being less expensive than private universities, but private universities have an edge in terms of reputation, credibility, and quality of education, thanks to their access to experienced personnel, celebrity guest speakers, and advanced technology equipment. To enhance their competitiveness, private universities in Bangkok should focus on the following areas:

Issue 1: Differentiate their products by creating unique courses and specializations that set them apart from their competitors. They can also form alliances or sign Memorandums of Understanding with foreign universities to enhance the credibility of their courses.

Issue 2: Offer a diverse range of courses that meet the demands of the market. However, it is important to ensure that the university is well-prepared to offer these courses and has the necessary resources to maintain quality. Graduating students who are not well-prepared or who lack the necessary skills will have a negative impact on the university's reputation in the long run.

It is crucial for universities to maintain high standards of quality in their education business, as it differs significantly from other types of businesses. By implementing strategies that focus on product differentiation and meeting market demands, private universities in Bangkok can maintain their competitiveness and continue to attract students who are seeking high-quality education.

References

- Limrung Yuenyong & Narong Rit. (2017). *A study of the way of needs affecting the decision to choose a study plan for arts and music at the secondary level of schools in the Bangkok area to create strategies to promote service marketing*. Doctoral dissertation, Silpakorn University.
- Maneerat Iad Ngamsom & Sasanan Wiwatthanachat. (2020). The value of the university seal and the decision-making process for admission to private universities in Bangkok and its vicinity. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Rajapruk University*, 5(3), 179-192.
- Muangmee, C., Kot, S., Meekaewkunchorn, N., Kassakorn, N., Tiranawatananun, S., & Khalid, B. (2021). Students' use behavior towards e-learning tools during COVID-19 pandemics: case study of higher educational institutions of Thailand. *Int J Eval & Res Educ* ISSN, 2252(8822), 1167.
- Nadda Kanjananont. (2019). Integrated marketing communications via digital media affecting students' decision to study in private universities in Bangkok and its vicinity. *Journal of Communication Arts Review*, 23(2), 211-222.
- Phophangphum, N., & Trisang, S. (2022). Marketing Strategies Affecting the Decision to Use Safety Training Service of Ayutthaya Province Members. *Journal of Management Science Review*, 24(2), 11-18.
- Ratnatthanon Onchuun & Saipin Panthong. (2021). Market Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions in Choosing Private Educational Institutions in Bilateral Vocational Diploma Level in Phra Pradaeng District, Province. Samut Prakan. *Journal of Academic and Research University of Northeastern Region*, 11(3), 63-77.
- Yomchinda, T., Yomchinda, L., & Tagawitoonsak, N. (2018). Factors Affecting Students' Decision to Study Master of Business Administration in Bangkok. *Journal of Business Administration and Social Sciences Ramkhamhaeng University*, 1(3), 72-82.