

“The factors influencing undergraduate student’s decision making of bachelor degree in Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University”

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Abstract

In tertiary education in Thailand, student decision in order to choose the program of study is important. To study the factors of decision-making could help the university to respond better to their student needs. This study aims to answer the questions about what are the factors that influence student selection of Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University. In terms of selecting samples, a total of 50 respondents who are undergraduate students from Didyasarin International College are selected. These target groups will be chosen by randomly method. The researcher will choose closed questionnaires for this study. The closed questionnaire will be used for large scale surveys, then analysis process by the computer later. The data collected from the survey was analyzed using the percentage. A series of analyses, including descriptive and factor analysis were conducted on the data. Finally, the study was given the conclusion and recommendation for further research. Follow by the reflection at the end.

Keyword: *Tertiary education, Factor influencing, Decision making*

Introduction

Tertiary education has rapidly evolved towards an overtly market-based system in which public and private universities forcefully compete for students. In the interests of students, and of the quality of the education system overall, it has become increasingly important to understand students’ expectations, the influences on them, and their decision-making processes at and around the points of initial application and later enrollment in a university.

Amazingly a few researches have been done in Southern Thailand as to how and why student choose a particular university during the process of undergraduate tertiary application. The aim of this research was to answer this simple question about what are the factors that influence student selection of Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University. The research area concerned the factors influencing undergraduate student’s decision making of bachelor degree in Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University , Thailand. There are three reasons for selecting this

topic. Firstly, the researcher works as a lecturer in Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University which is one of the universities in Southern Thailand. Secondly, the researcher realise that just a few of studies have been researched in this area, particularly in Southern Thailand. Although our location close to many countries use English as their official language such as Malaysia and Singapore. Lastly, this research is able to be a good case study for any university. Thus if university apply the right strategies, not just only student but also universities can benefits from this research. Therefore the researcher will investigate the factors influencing undergraduate student's decision making of bachelor degree in Didyasarin International College in order to meet and analyse the finding.

Objectives

There are two objectives for this study, which are to determine the importance and degree of influence of these external sources of information and to conclude and recommendations on the tertiary education system of expanding student choices for any university, which provide international program.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Total cost of attending tertiary studies and the availability of financial aid are very important factors for many students.

Hypothesis 2: Undergraduate student's choice decision is affected by the university's reputation. The higher reputation, the more likely the student would choose the university.

Hypothesis 3: Parents have a range of powerful effects on student decisions.

Literature review

Decision-making

College/university choice has been viewed as a three-stage decision process. The first stage, college aspiration formation which students improve the intention to continue their education after secondary level. Then the second stage is search and application. At this stage, students begin to obtain information regarding the college attributes that are particularly important to them in order to decide which college/university to choose. This stage ends when students decided to apply to a particular institution. After their application and the colleges' acceptance, students enter the third stage which is actual selection and attendance. During this phase, students compare and evaluate their preferred alternatives in terms of college attributes most important to them. This phase ends with the final attendance or enrollment decision. (Samsinar & Siti, 2003) Also Linda & Nick (2005) pointed that student choice is a basic and integral part of theory and research on higher education. For unlike elementary, primary and secondary schools, post-secondary students have the freedom to choose. They must decide whether to go to college, which college to enroll

in, what to major in, which courses to take, and so on. In a study on service quality in higher education showed that six factors that are important to students were:

1. Program issues
2. Academic reputation
3. Physical aspects
4. Career opportunities
5. Geographical location
6. Time

Moreover, Howard (2002) said that college rankings are widely represented as vital tools for making informed decisions about the college selection process. On the other hand, very little real information is available about students' actual use of rankings in the college decision-making process. Ratings in news magazines are of particular importance to first-time, full-time freshmen attending ranked, private institutions. Other students who deem rankings important are traditionally aged, live on-campus, attend a school a significant distance from home and have a high level of financial status. It is recommended that institutions rethink their attitude on college rankings and acknowledge their influence on prospective students. However, Brooks (2004) stated that large scale surveys have shown consistently that parents are the most commonly consulted group of people when young people are considering their higher education choices. Though qualitative work in this area has suggested that these statistics mask considerable differences in the role of mothers and fathers in terms of both the level and type of involvement in their children's decisions. This article draws on a longitudinal study of decision making processes and suggests that there is evidence of detailed parent involvement, including the involvement of fathers. Beside, James (2000) mentioned that the influences of significant others choice were established as around 80% was influence by mother and 72% by father. Also about 48% by best friend and only 22% of those heading for university thought other friends were significant, whereas around 30% of those going elsewhere thought so. Also student decisions are strongly influenced by socioeconomic background, geographical location and gender.

Methodology

According to select samples, a total of 50 respondents who are undergraduate students from Didyasarin International College, Hatyai University are selected. These target groups will be chosen by randomly method. The researcher will choose closed questionnaires for this study. The closed questionnaire will be used for large scale surveys, then analysis process by the computer later. The data collected from the survey was analyzed using the percentage. A series of analyses, including descriptive and factor analysis were conducted on the data.

Discussion

To compare individual findings with research done by others was selected because of the limited time. The result from questionnaires will present later. Samsinar & Siti (2003) shown the ranking of the degree of influence of external sources on students' college choice decision. Friends and schoolmates appear to have the greatest influence over students in making a college choice. Parents and relatives also seem to be very influential over the decision. Newspapers and educational fairs came in third and fourth respectively. College promotional material and representatives have a moderate influence over students, ranking at fifth and sixth place respectively. Television and radio seem to have the least influence among the ten sources on students' college choice decision. According to the top ten list variables that influence students' college choice decision, students appear to be very concerned about the quality of teaching, the institution's reputation, and the marketability of degree in selecting their colleges, as these three variables rank first, second, and third respectively. Job opportunities (related to marketability of degree) and tuitions fees also seem to be important considerations to the students. The lowest ranking variable was the availability of part-time studies. This supposedly did not concern the respondents as they were all full-time. While Howard (2002) said that college rankings are widely represented as vital tools for making informed decisions about the college selection process. On the other hand, little information is available about students' actual use of rankings in the college decision-making process. Ratings in news magazines are of particular importance to first-time, full-time freshmen, private institutions. Other students rankings important are usually aged, live on-campus, distance from home (location) and financial status. Also James (2000) pointed that student decisions are strongly influenced by socioeconomic background, geographical location and gender. Similarly Linda & Nick (2005) showed that six factors that are important to students were program issues, academic reputation, physical aspects, career opportunities, geographical location and time for completion. In term of individual final decision making, Samsinar & Siti (2003) presented that 84.3% reported gathering the information themselves. A significant proportion (31.9%) also relied wholly or partially on friends in gathering information. Parents, siblings, and relatives do not seem to play a major role in gathering information for most respondents. Nevertheless, Brooks (2004) stated that parents are the most commonly consulted group of people when young people are considering their higher education choices. This article attractions on a longitudinal study of decision making processes and suggests that there is evidence of detailed parent involvement. Likewise, James (2000) mentioned that the influences of significant others choice were established as around 80% was influence by mother and 72% by father. Also about 48% by best friend and only 22% of those heading for university thought other friends were significant.

Conclusion

This research has indicated what students actually value in selecting a college to enroll in. In particular, the quality of teaching, institution's image, and campus surroundings must all be considered by college operators in attracting students. Preparing to give what students want is the first step in applying marketing concepts to higher education. In conclusion, this study is an early effort to discover the wide fields of education scene, particularly from the viewpoint of direct customers, the students. It is hoped that follow-up studies would provide more coverage relative to the findings of this research.

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