Marketing Mix and External Factors in influencing Digital Marketing Program Enrollment in a Higher Education: A Case Study of Digital Marketing Program Students at the Faculty of Business Administration, Bangkok University

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Abstract

This research is a study of factors affecting the decision of digital marketing students from the faculty of business administration, at Bangkok University, to choose a digital marketing program at the higher education level. This study is quantitative research using survey research with a sample size of 233 people. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to answer the research questions and hypotheses. The findings show that the marketing mix and external influence factors are the two primary categories that affect decision-making in selecting the digital marketing program in a higher education institution. The external factors are the influence of technology, family and friends, and job opportunities. Emphasizing the significance of these two components in program development is imperative for the university to attain the top position in the competitive higher education market.

Keywords: Marketing Mix, Higher Education, Digital Marketing Program

Introduction

One of the essential tools supporting the development of human resources is education. As a master's degree gives graduates significant influence over their futures and allows them to contribute to society. Education institution necessitates continuous enhancement of both quality and standards to effectively meet student's demands and keep up with the changing needs in the contemporary era. Considering the size of the younger prospects targeted for higher education and the number of universities in Thailand, further studies on factors that influence students in choosing a degree are crucial. One of the most popular programs in higher education is a digital marketing degree, reflecting the increasing importance of digital strategies in business operations. Digital marketing has become a fundamental aspect of any comprehensive marketing strategy.

The quick change in the digital environment and the resulting need for experts who understand how to use digital marketing are in line with this educational trend. Since digital marketing programs growing in popularity, knowing the factors that affect the decision-making process of the prospects in enrolling on the digital marketing program for a higher level will be advantageous for the university in developing the program. Therefore, this research examines the marketing mix and external factors that affect the prospect in choosing a digital marketing program.

Objectives

1. To study the effects of marketing mix factors on digital marketing enrollment for a higher level.
2. To study the effects of external factors on digital marketing enrollment for a higher level.

Concept theory framework

Research Questions

1. To study the effects of marketing mix factors on digital marketing enrollment for a higher level.
2. To study the effects of external factors on digital marketing enrollment for a higher level.

Conceptual Framework
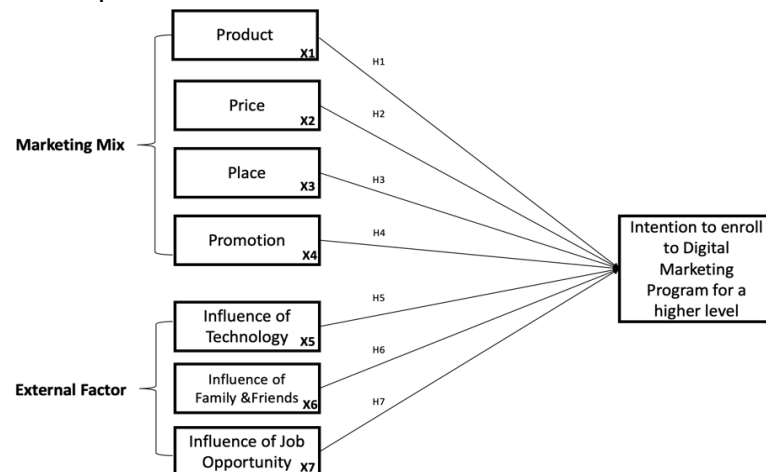
Hypothesis

H1: Product Factors Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

H2: Price Factors Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

H3: Place Factors Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

H4: Promotion Factors Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

H5: Influence of Technology Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

H6: Influence of Family & Friends Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

H7: Influence of Job Opportunity Have a Positive Impact on Digital Marketing Program Enrollment for a higher level

Literature review

Marketing Mix: Product

The academic services and programs offered by universities are referred to as the "product component" in higher education. Research by Kotler and Fox (1995) emphasizes how important it is to align program offers to student needs and market demand. Academic institutions that offer innovative and pertinent curricula generally draw a higher volume of applications. In preparing an educational program, both course designs and other student services should collaboratively develop to enhance the institute's attractiveness and reputation (Nadelson et al., 2013). A study by Berliant (2020) also reveals that the program's quality, relevance, and innovation have a significant impact on students' evaluations of academic programs.

Marketing Mix: Price

The price component in higher education can be referred to as the cost of education. Findings from research by Hemsley and Oplatka (2006) reveal how much students' decisions are influenced by their perception of value for money, which includes tuition costs and the availability of financial aid. Postgraduate students are reported to be partially sensitive to tuition costs, payment flexibility, and alternate payment options. (Dao and Thorpe, 2015). To effectively attract prospects, competitive advantage can be gained by educational institutions that can clearly convey the value of their programs in relation to their costs (Hemsley and Oplatka, 2006).

Marketing Mix: Place

One of the key components of the higher education marketing mix is an institution's location. According to Becker and Watts (2001), students' decisions are influenced by universities' physical locations as well as their accessibility. Different populations can be attracted to urban, suburban, or rural environments. Educational Institutions should provide access for prospects for those from regional, remote, and rural backgrounds to attract prospective students (Brownie et al., 2023).

Marketing Mix: Promotion

The promotional activities, including marketing and communication strategies, are essential for attracting prospective students. To achieve communication objectives and goals, educational institutions should use different promotional tools (Kotler and Fox, 1995). As indicated by Yuan and Powell's (2013) research, carrying out a strong online presence, engaging in social media, and using targeted advertising is crucial in interfacing with young prospects. The promotion component utilizing digital marketing can result in interested prospects sharing and spreading promotional content online (Camilleri, 2019). A viral dispersion of the program's promotional message may trigger a positive response among prospects. Higher education institutions may enhance their attractiveness through promotional activities as such word-of-mouth publicity on social networks (Dumpit and Fernandez, 2017).

External Factor: Influence of technology

In the contemporary era, digital marketing plays a vital role. A variety of vocations view proficiency with digital tools and navigation as a valued skill set. Undoubtedly, young prospects are well-familiar with the usage of various technological tools. One important factor that prospective students consider is the need to enhance digital literacy and skills (Camilleri and Camilleri, 2017). Smith and Caruso's (2010) research highlight the fact that students pursuing higher education are looking for schools that provide courses that develop digital competencies.

External Factor: Influence of family & friends

According to research by Rowan et al. (2008), family is a major influence on people's decisions to pursue higher education. Parents are frequently seen as major influencers since they provide support, guidance, and expectations that affect the colleges and subjects that students choose to pursue. The influence of friends is also significant. The significance of social networks in the collegiate decision-making process is emphasized in Tinto's (1975) social integration model. Friends can influence people's decisions and perceptions by sharing experiences, offering support, and imparting information. Research suggests that the influence of family and friends has a significant impact on academic results and choice of study (Jeynes, 2003).

External Factor: Influence of job opportunity

Choosing the right career path is becoming more and more important for young students today. Students consider many things when choosing a career and college major. A study conducted by Carnevale et al. (2013) highlights how industry demands, and labor market trends affect higher education choices. People tend to select courses of study and universities that are aligned with industry trends. Students evaluate the potential return on investment of their education, considering factors such as future careers, earning potential, and alumni success (Malgwi, Howe, and Burnaby, 2010).

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This research is quantitative research using survey research. The data was collected from a sample of the population using an online questionnaire as a data collection tool. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to answer the research questions and hypotheses by applying IBM SPSS v.28. Stepwise multiple regression analysis technique was employed in this paper.

Population and Sample Selection

The population of this study is all students majoring in Digital Marketing at the Faculty of Business Administration, Bangkok University. The sample size is 233 people.
The sample was selected using a convenient sampling method. The researcher believed that the list of names was a representative sample because they were all students majoring in Digital Marketing at the Faculty of Business Administration.

Instrument Design

The researcher used an online questionnaire as a data collection tool. The questionnaire was a closed-ended questionnaire with predetermined answers for the respondents to choose from. The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review and related research. The reliability and validity of the measurements were assessed before analyzing the regression.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections: **Section 1:** General information about the respondents. **Section 2:** Importance of the marketing mix, including product, price, place, and promotion. **Section 3:** External influencing factors, including influence of technology, influence of family and friends, and influence of job opportunity. **Section 4:** Decision-making to choose the Digital Marketing Program at Bangkok University

Results

General Information

Year of Study: It can be concluded that this data is for survey respondents who are in years 1-4, with the most respondents in year 1, followed by year 4, and year 3 and 2 respectively. **Gender:** It can be concluded that this data is for survey respondents who are predominantly female, with only 25% male respondents. Male respondents are 3 times less than female respondents. **Age:** It can be concluded that this data is for survey respondents who are mostly in school or just starting their careers, with only 6.0% of survey respondents being 23-25 years old. Most survey respondents are 18-22 years old, accounting for 93.1%. **Average Family Income/ Month:** It can be concluded that this data is for survey respondents who mostly have a monthly average income below 50,000 Thai baht, with only 28% of survey respondents having a monthly average income of more than 50,000 Thai baht. The data on the survey respondents is diverse. **Educational**

Qualification: It can be concluded that most survey respondents had completed high school before entering university, with only 9.2% of survey respondents having completed a GED equivalence test, 5.2% of survey respondents having completed a vocational certificate, and 1.7% of survey respondents having completed a high vocational certificate.

Grades: It can be concluded that most survey respondents had a grade point average of 3.01, with only 1.3% of survey respondents having a grade point average lower than 2.00, 9.1% of survey respondents having a grade point average between 2.00 and 2.50, and 22.8% of survey respondents having a grade point average between 2.51 and 3.00. Most survey respondents had a grade point average of 3.01 or higher, accounting for 67.4%.

Table1: Present the results of stepwise multiple regression analysis when adding factors one by one)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1 X_7	$.561^a$	.315	.312	.54417	105.852	$<.001^b$
2 X_7, X_4	$.590^b$	.348	.342	.53233	60.982	$<.001^c$

a. Predictors: (Constant), X_7

b. Predictors: (Constant), X_7, X_4

From Table 1, the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis to find the predictors that have an impact on the enrollment in digital marketing for a higher level, from 7 independent variables, there are 2 independent variables that have been tested to be significantly different at the statistical level of 0.01, namely the Influence of Job Opportunity (X7) factor and the Promotion factor (X4). This can be explained as follows: The Influence of Job Opportunity (X7) factor can be predicted to be the factor that has the greatest impact on the enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level, with statistical significance at the 0.01 level. The regression coefficient or predictive power is 0.312, with an impact on the expected innovative performance of 31.20% when adding variables one at a time. Therefore, hypothesis 7 (H7) that the Influence of Job Opportunity factor has a positive impact on the enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level is accepted. When the Promotion factor (X4) is added to the equation, the regression coefficient or predictive power increases to 0.342. When the difference between this value and the original regression coefficient or predictive power is checked, it is found that it is still statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This means that the Influence of Job Opportunity and Promotion factors have an increased impact on the enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level of 34.20%. Therefore, the hypothesis 4 Hh4) that the Promotion factor has a positive impact on the enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level is accepted.

Table2: Present the results of stepwise multiple regression analysis

		B	S.D.	Beta	t	P
1	Influence of Job Opportunity (X_7)	0.459	0.059	0.468	7.777	<.001
2	Promotion Factors (X_4)	0.184	0.055	0.203	3.369	<.001
R = 0.590	R^2 = 0.348			Adjusted R^2 = 0.342		
SEE = 0.532	F = 60.982*			Constant = 1.315		

From Table 2, it was found that when stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed, the Influence of Job Opportunity (X7) and Promotion Factor (X4) could jointly predict the enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. They could explain 34.8% of the variation in the enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level (R2 = 0.348), with a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.590 and a standard error of prediction (SEE) of 0.532. These can be explained in detail as follows: The Influence of Job Opportunity (X7) has a regression coefficient of 0.459, meaning that if Influence of Job Opportunity increases by 1 unit while other factors remain constant, it will lead to a decision to study Digital Marketing by 0.459 units. The Promotion Factor (X4) has a regression coefficient of 0.184, meaning that if Promotion Factor increases by 1 unit while other factors remain constant, it will lead to a decision to study Digital Marketing by 0.184 units. Therefore, from the data analysis results, the two variables that can jointly predict the trend of enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level can be used to construct a predictive equation in raw score as follows:

Y= 1.315 + 0.459 (Influence of Job Opportunity) + 0.184 (Promotion Factor)

Z_Y= 0.468(Influence of Job Opportunity) + 0.203(Promotion Factor)

In this equation, the Influence of Job Opportunity is the factor with the best predictive power for enrollment in Digital Marketing for a higher level, followed by the Promotion Factor.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study investigates the factors that affect the decision to enroll in a digital marketing program for a higher level. A survey of 233 undergraduate students in Thailand was conducted. The results show that most respondents are female, aged 18-22, and come from families with monthly incomes of more than 50,000 baht. They have a high school diploma and a GPA of more than 3.51. Most respondents have no previous business experience. The results of the survey show that the four marketing mix factors (product, price, place, and promotion) and the two external factors (influence of technology and influence of job opportunity) all have a high level of confidence in the decision to apply in a digital marketing program for a higher level (high-level confidence from respondents). However, the stepwise multiple regression analysis shows that the influence of job opportunity and promotion are the two most important factors that predict enrollment in digital marketing for a higher level. These findings suggest that educational institutions that offer digital marketing programs should focus on meeting the needs

of the job market and creating attractive promotions to attract students.

Impacts of this research

1. Identify key enrollment drivers: By understanding students' priorities, such as job opportunities and promotions, institutions can tailor their digital marketing programs for a higher level to better meet student needs and expectations.
2. Inform program development and Craft effective promotional strategies: Understanding preferred marketing channels and messaging styles can help institutions reach their target audience more effectively and attract a wider range of diverse students.

Future Research Suggestions

1. Explore broader demographics: While this study focused on undergraduate students from Bangkok University, future research could explore a wider range of demographics, such as working professionals considering career transitions or individual learners.
2. Investigate specific job opportunities: Future research could explore specific types of digital marketing jobs students are interested in for a higher level.

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