

Comparing Universities' perception of what their Students expect and students' expectations

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Key word

Universities' perception, students' expectations, Marketing, Private University, Public University, Strategy

Abstract

This article looks at the awareness of the importance of marketing in four Universities in Chiang Mai. Whilst the study is about marketing the focus is on the awareness of the students' expectations by the senior staff and other staff of the Universities. The main thesis underpinning this article is that to successfully market themselves the universities should make it their business to know the expectations that the students bring about their universities. If there is "incongruence" or a wide gap between what the students expect and what the senior staff and other staff think what the students expect. There is a danger that the students will feel let down and in the long run it will affect the standing of the Universities. The samples were from Four Universities and a survey method based on a specially designed questionnaire was used. On the whole the Four Universities were not keeping marketing themselves as the academics probably think that they must not "sell" their universities. However when asked if they were getting the quality of students they wanted and the numbers, only Chiang Mai University agreed, the other three did not feel that they were attracting either the quality or the numbers they needed. The Universities did not keep a people and data base of students in terms of age, gender, background, and other data which would give them a better idea of where their students are coming from. The university senior staff and other staffs' ideas of what their students expected were far from what the students' really expected. Equally the staffs' perceptions of the actual experiences of the students were significantly different.

Introduction

There were also differences, in many instances, between what the senior staff believed and the beliefs of the staff. This may indicate that true 'collegiate' culture may not exist in these universities and that the staffs are not involved and consulted in decision making. The gap between the expectations of the students and the staff also leads one to question the extent to which the staff and students communicate with each other. This perception is strengthened when one looks at the relationship between the preferred learning styles of the students and their satisfaction with the learning and teaching style of the staff.

One of the conclusions to emerge, as already identified, is the extent to which the three stakeholders have very different views of the facilities and administration of all the universities. Without students, schools would close their doors, not just because tuition revenues would drop but because the schools would no longer have clients to receive the classes, counselling and other services that the institutions were established to provide. And they would stop graduating new alumni who in future would provide financial support and recognition for the institution. Thai Universities have to compete

for good students as their budgets depend on the recruitment and retention of students. Different universities are in the competitive environment and therefore need to be aware of marketing and developing marketing strategies.

This research examines the level of awareness of marketing between different universities and within each university between different levels of staff. The study examines the perception of important of marketing offered by the universities in the eyes of the senior and other staff and their students. The purpose of this study is to examine the Perception of Importance of Marketing as Perceived by the Senior Staff, Staff, and Students of Four Universities in Chiang Mai. Even though marketing mix consisting of 4 P's (Product, Price, Place and Promotion), is usually used in business sectors, such concepts can be applied into educational institutions, particularly in higher education with the consideration of particular contexts such as government policy and capabilities of the higher education. Since institutional marketing has become an important management approach, the information derived from the study could be a useful contribution toward the understanding of perception and expectation of senior staff, staff, and student of the university which can lead to marketing management strategy concepts for the Government and Private University. Furthermore, the information derived can serve as a practical tool for those who want to employ these concepts. The universities seeking to plan and implement marketing strategy programs might use the outcomes of the study to increase the probability of program success.

Methodology

The participants in this study were Vice Chancellor or Senior Staff, Staff, and students from public and private universities in Chiang Mai who were registered members of the Commission on Higher Education)CHE(. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education. Almost all private and public universities in Thailand are registered members of the CHE. The researcher surveyed the entire population of 4 universities to ensure the generalisability of the study. Questionnaires were distributed to one private and three public universities which is Payap University, Rajabhat Chiang Mai University, Mai Jo University, and Chiang Mai University. To encourage cooperation a letter of recommendation that was signed by the Vice Chancellor or Senior Staff in each university. The Questionnaire was distributed by a researcher to the Vice Chancellor or senior Staff, student, and staff from university. One university received three types of Questionnaire which is provided for 10% of Vice Chancellor or Senior Staff from university, 10% of staff from university, and 10% of student from each faculty and each university. The letter attached to the Questionnaire indicated the purpose of the study and for voluntary participation. The attached letter stated clearly that the responses would be kept confidential. Moreover, no personal data were required in the Questionnaire. The data were coded and analyzed as follows:

1. Descriptive statistics (percentages and means) were computed to determine the demographic composition of the participating institutions.
2. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) were computed for the extent to which each marketing technique had been used.
3. Descriptive statistics were computed for the perceived effectiveness of each marketing technique used by the responding institutions.
4. Cross-tabulations of the use and perceived effectiveness of the marketing techniques were done based on demographic characteristics of the responding university.
5. Anova was used to do more complex analysis.

Results

The perception of marketing was different between senior staff, staff, and students who have been working and studying in four universities in Chiang Mai. There was a significant difference in perception of quality of students with all senior staff disappointed with the quality of students recruited. There was a significant difference in the senior and other staff's perceptions of what the students expected and what the students actually expected. There was also a significant difference between what the students expected prior to joining the universities and their actual experiences suggesting that either the students' expectations or the universities' ideas as to what the students are looking for what the universities provide are 'incongruent', meaning that there is a considerable gap of communication between them. There were also differences, in many instances, between what the senior staff believed and the beliefs of the staff. This may indicate that true 'collegiate' culture may not exist in these universities and that the staffs are not involved and consulted in decision making. The gap between the expectations of the students and the staff also leads one to question the extent to which the staff and students communicate with each other. This perception is strengthened when one looks at the relationship between the preferred learning styles of the students and their satisfaction with the learning and teaching style of the staff. One of the conclusions to emerge, as already identified, is the extent to which the three stakeholders have very different views of the facilities and administration of all the universities.

Summary and Conclusion

The following Research questions were incorporated:

1. Is there difference between the perceptions of marketing between the senior staff, staff, and student of the universities?
2. Is there difference between the perceptions of quality between the senior staff, staff, and student of the universities?
3. Is there difference between an expectation of quality of service between the senior staff, staff, and student of the universities?
4. Is there difference between an experience of quality of service between the senior staff, staff, and students of the universities?
5. Is There difference between the perceptions of quality satisfaction of senior staff, staff, and student from difference universities
6. On all these questions the researcher found that differences exist at all levels. It seems that there is a lack of understanding of what 'marketing orientation' means. As part of recommendations brief note on marketing orientation is included.

Discussion

An application of marketing in non-profit organizations is debatable because there are people who accept this approach into practice but others criticize it negatively. However, educational environments are encountering a change in administrative systems. The higher education system is avoidably affected. First of all, a change in government support in the form of financial contribution is apparent in many countries in the globe. A decrease of financial support for the higher education system from the government results from two factors, an economic downturn and a need of improvement in administrative efficiency. In the time of an economic recession, the government attempts to allocate appropriately a limited budget to the neediest system of the country. Thus it is not surprising to note that several countries cut budgets for higher education. However, there are some countries that enhance competitiveness by financially granting for outstanding institutions. Secondly, the number of competitors in the higher education rises so the demand for students to exist in the

system. One way to survive, in such an arena, is to bring some business approaches into practice under non-profit contexts.

Thailand is confronted with economic chaos that has resulted in a decline in the government budget. This is noted budget has affected every system in the country. The higher education system in Thailand is no exception. Public universities are supported decreasingly in term of financial contributions. This phenomenon is congruent with a purpose of the new act, National Education Act of B.E. 2542, which aims at changing status of public universities to be state-supervised universities. Moreover, a number of higher institutions have been increased since 1996. This involves an intense competition. On the other hand, a number of population aged 18 to 24 has decreased. This causes a tougher competition in this system. Thus, this study is to examination of Perception of Important of Marketing as Perceived by the Senior Staff, Staff, and Students of Four Universities in Chiang Mai. No matter how marketing is utilized in any organizations, such as business, nonprofits and higher education institutions, its aim is to satisfy customers. Although customers in the organizations are different, marketing is certainly adapted to work together with different types of customers.

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