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Factors influencing students' enrollment in IT related programs at International colleges in Myanmar

# Declaration of own work

I, Min Thu Khant, a B.Sc.(hons) candidate, confirm that the work of the following title

“Factors influencing students' enrollment in it related programs at international colleges in Myanmar.”

is exclusively carried out by myself and this work has not been submitted for other degree or qualification. I have also confirmed that the appropriate credits have been given for research papers, articles and E-books where references have been made to the work of others.



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# Abstract

Every single year, high school graduate students from Myanmar are coming across with the crucial decisions for determining whether or not to join the secondary education due to the current education system of Myanmar. By taking advantage of this reason, private International Institutions have been gradually taking over the place of governmental universities along with the promise of higher qualification for future life. This study discusses about why some of the students are choosing the Private Institutions over traditional ones. Moreover, this research continues to explore “factors influencing students' enrollment in IT related programs at Private International Colleges” which will primarily help International Private Institutions of Higher Education to fine-tune their marketing approaches. Additionally, this paper also evaluates “Educational Service Marketing Strategy” which is how education services can be considered as marketing and how it can adopt traditional marketing strategy by combining the marketing model (Service Marketing Mix) and Conceptual Model. The proposed research methodology, model and hypothesis are produced through this paper.

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# Introduction

Every year, university bound graduating high school students from Myanmar are coming across with the problematic decision for determining whether or not to join the secondary education and the choice of university or college (Beswick & Roslyn, 1989) . Those are the two critical decisions they had to make which serve as a mile stone for most part of their career life. Most Universities or Colleges in Myanmar are under the control of the Ministry of Education (Hays, 2014) and those institutes require a range of qualifications which is determined by total marks major and subjects taught in high school period. As a result, students those who get the total of low mark has no chance of joining the institute with higher qualification even if they wanted. For that reason, this is where Private International institutes, unlike local government administered Universities, which mostly offer internationally recognized Diploma or Bachelor Degree come in.

It is an undeniable fact that Information Technology has been immensely growing with an incredible momentum. The influences are also increasing massively along with the technology. As computers find their way into more and more into business, services and products, people who has knowledge about computing or Information Technology are in demand in every industry (Anon., 2018). Consequently, demand in IT related International Recognized Degree are increasing more and more.

On the other hand, intense competition in higher education area in Myanmar has influenced many private colleges to turn out to be “Entrepreneurs” and apply marketing strategies in enrolling students locally. One of the major challenges that those private colleges encounter is their capability to attract new students. As technology continues to drive the pace of progress in education and economic climates changes, even educational institutions are becoming necessary to not only reach out to the utmost measure of students’ number possible but also to “seal the deal” in a proficient and penny-wise approach. As a consequence, many private colleges are seeking the requirement to fine-tune their individual “enrollment strategies” in order to stay remain a pacemaker among peers.

**The Aim** of this study is to generate statistical reports of “Factors influencing students' enrollment in IT related programs at International Colleges in Myanmar” for the international private institutes which can help to determine the perspectives (influential factors) that should be more emphasize while marketing for new recruitments.

**The objectives** of this study are investigating

* Factors influencing students' enrollment in IT related programs at International Colleges in Myanmar.
* A concept model to investigate the influential factors.

# Literature Review on Factors and Methodology

## Descriptive Research Methodology

Descriptive research is focused on “casting the spot-light on current issues or problem thorough a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely then was possible without employing this method” (Dudovskiy, et al., 2018). The descriptive statistics state what is, while inferential statistics try to determine cause and effect (Anon., 2001). This is one of the reason which this Descriptive can be used in this research since this research is trying to emphasize what are and how importance of each influencing factors of students to enroll in IT related private institutes in sequential order. Moreover, in this descriptive study, subjects or participants are observed in a natural and unchanged environment (McNabb, 2018). For Example, students who are currently attending in IT related Private Institutes can be research without interference with their normal activities or behavior. Additionally, data collection methods also allow multifaceted approach for gathering information deeply (McNabb, 2018). Therefore, it can also be considered as an another reason to apply this methodology on current research since this research include multi influencing factors to be examined. Finally, collected data from survey can be used by the Private institutes to adjust or emphasize their marketing strategy.

## Conceptual model

Conceptual model is a representation of an explanatory theory. It shows the key concepts of an explanatory theory and the hypothesized relationship between them. Regarding to the key concepts, two rules can be applied. The first rule states that the key concept can be characterized as a variable. The second rule is the values it can take on are specified and it is indicated which values are intended to be included in the study (Powell-Morse, 2017). It provides a better overview of relationships between key concepts. The relationship between key concept and the conceptual model are causal relationship. Causal relationship has two important properties the direction and the strength. The direction of the causal relationship can either be positive which is indicated by (+) sign and be negative which is indicated by (-) sign.

In a positive relationship, low values from the independent variable are related with low values on the Dependent variable and high values on the independent variable are associated with the high values on the Dependent variable. A negative relationship implies that low values on the independent variables are related with the high values on the Dependent variable and high values from the independent variable are associated with the low values on the Dependent variable. (UvA, 2017)

The strength of the casual relationship can vary from No effect, Weak effect, Moderate effect to Strong effect. In weak effect, large change in independent variable is required only for a small change in dependent variable. Vise visa in strong effect, only a small change in independent variable is needed for a large change. (UvA, 2017)

## Educational Service Marketing Strategy

### Education as a service

Even though educational institutions can be considered as service providers which deliver education services, the matter is that should institutions get take account in marketing or not. Alternative challenging issue to think through is whether the students should be considered as consumers in the end (Kunwar, 2017). For example, let’s say we are marketing a high quality pudding which is extremely expensive compared to the traditional ones. Although the extraordinary quality can only be purchased by those who can actually afford it, perhaps, it will not be the best attention of the public if only those who can have enough money to pay education charges would be able to afford education. By judging from this, marketing education should not be considered as same as traditional marketing. Nevertheless, gradually growing competition among institutions and fast growing economic climates changes forces in the education division has made it compulsory to understand marketing the education as well. Since consumers, students’ needs are essential to be fulfilled, providing education is absolutely a social process because of those institutes or universities need to cultivate approaches to satisfy the students, consumers (Kunwar, 2017).

### Service Marketing Mix -7p of Marketing

The Extended marketing mix, also known as the service marketing mix is a vital part of a service blue print design (Bhasin, 2017). Kunwar states that “The fundamental concept behind services marketing is to close the gap between how customer, student expect services to be and how they are perceived during consumption” which is referred as the GAP model of service quality. This model of services highlights numerous factors that cause the difference in expectation and perception of services. If the differences between desire level of services expectations and perceptions of services is fall within the “zone of tolerance”, then the quality of services is perceived to acceptable (V.A.,Gremler, et al., 2009) which means if the zone of tolerance is less than Zero (less than satisfactory level of service), customers are not pleased. Conversely, if the service delivered surpass (positive value) the zone of tolerance, the customers are overjoyed with beyond level of desired service. According to this GAP model, the services seller will have to understand and control over this tolerance quantity to adjust the services and the income returned from the customers. This marketing strategy is made up of various variables that an business can control with the intention of creating a promise of value to be delivered (value proposition) for the customer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Even though most commonly used elements of this model are product, price, place and promotion, which is known as “4Ps”, there is also “7Ps” extended model as in Figure 1 with additional three elements: physical evidence, processes and people.

Figure 1 Extended marketing mix (7Ps) for services (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010)

## Variables choice Decision

In this literature review, variables are evaluated based on this “7Ps” of Marketing and “A Conceptual Framework for institutional factors influencing student’s college choice” referenced from (Ming, 2010)’s paper. Since the marketing mix involves different categories of influential factors, some concerns could not be exactly divided under its category. Nonetheless, it is possible to understand the factors according to different marketing mix elements accordingly (Ming, 2010).

### Financial aid and Price

According (Ming, 2010)’s research, it is concluded that Financial aid and price can be measured as pricing in “7Ps”. (Chetty, 2010) states that it is difficult to determine price of services since they are very variable depending on category of services provided. Additionally, many service providers are unable or unwilling to estimate price in advance. This resulted customer to reference prices with lack of accurate information. Another reason for customers lack of service price reference is that the customers feel overwhelmed with the information they are required (Chetty, 2010). Even if there are alternative difference competitive and can be estimate the difference in prices, to determine whether the price is fair or not for each individual institutes (in this current case) is a different story because service value can be varied depending on each individual (For example: quality of teaching methods, experiences of lecturer). Determining the price of own service quality is important since it is also a signal of service quality (Kenway, et al., 1993). According to (Ming, 2010) it has concluded that while finical aid (For example: scholar, promotion from the institute and student background family income) reduce the cost as a positive effect, price is a negative influence on college choice. Consequently, financial aid and price can be considered as a significant predictor that influences college choice.

**H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between financial aid and price and institution choice decision (Ming, 2010).

### Location

According to (Ming, 2010)’s report, research has consistently shown that location of college or university can be a foremost aspect for enrollment decision of students. In the same way as price from the mix model, Place can also be considered as location factor. Some students may looking for an institution near their hometown for low-cost, convenience, time-efficient and accessibility . (Hays, 2014) states that Campuses were forced to displace to remote locations distant from city centers due to security concerns, especially in Mandalay and Yangon. As a result, this has become a factor that should be considered while deciding which university to attend. In this circumstance, private institutes which are mostly located in the downtown area have become a better option when it comes to location. This study resulted the hypothesis that the location causes a substantial impact on deciding the college or institutions.

**H2:** There is a significant positive relationship between Location and institution choice decision (Ming, 2010).

### Future career

Sevier(1997) concluded that students are influenced by what graduate are doing after university, what institution did they join and what are their contributions to the society (Ming, 2010). Students often choose college or university based on their future career job opportunities when they graduate. (Hays, 2014) states that uneducated generation of people with no hope for the future are shaped under control of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, he also states that people who want to become school teacher can’t even get training. Paul Watson wrote in Los Angeles Times that Universities were treated as potential threats to the government’s rule but not as a sources of higher education critical to the country’s development ever since 1988 (Hays, 2014). As a result, the society started to lose in faith to the traditional education system. Consequently, there are only few jobs for the university graduates and even there are stories about graduates with a certain major such as physics or chemistry cleaning toilets, serving as waiters or working as prostitutes at Five-Star hotels. This has resulted the emergence of International private higher educational institutes, which offer a varied range of programs in specialized fields such as software engineering and business strategy. International recognized certificate or even a degree can be granted through those institutions which is likely to promise a better job prospect then a governmental university degree. Accordingly, this study has resulted a hypothesis that Future career is a significant indicator for choosing the college or institute.

**H3:** There is a significant positive relationship between Future career and institution choice decision (Ming, 2010).

### Program Specific factor

(Ming, 2011) established that having a variety of available programs is taking part as a major “important attributes” for the first year recruits to choose a particular higher educational institution. This factor could also be considered as product related category under the marketing mix model. Ford, Joseph & Joseph (1999) discusses that flexibility of degree program, time taken to complete a certain degree and range of degree options also includes that the students consider while selecting on the list of available colleges. Thus, this relationship represents as an influenced factor on students’ college choice.

**H4**: There is a significant positive relationship between Program Specific Factor and college choice decisions (Ming, 2011).

### Influences from people

According to (Rababah, 2016), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) concluded that peers, advisors, counselors, friends and parents’ influence have a hand at influencing the student’s major choice. Students tend to want to go the same college the same as their friends. (Ming, 2011) concluded that by having thoughts of other classmates will also make this choice, resulted a different in superior percentage of a student’s plan to enroll in college. He also stated that the recommendation from the family is the most important factor in choosing a college. Moreover, Baharun (2006) also claimed that friends can also be almost as important as family for deciding a college (Ming, 2011). Therefore, this relationship can be considered as a one of the significant influences on the choice of college.

**H5**: There is a significant positive relationship between influences from people and college choice decisions (Kunwar, 2017).

# Research Model (Conceptual Model)

The research model for this paper will be a conceptual model since it is the key for developing research hypotheses, identifying concepts to study and interpreting research results although almost all of the hypotheses and concepts are referenced from similar researches. The model based on current scenario is shown in Figure 2.

**Independent Variables**

Financial aid and Price

H1

Location

H2

Institution Choice Decision

H3

Future Career

**Dependent Variable**

H4

H5

Program Specific Factor

Influences from People

Figure 2 Conceptual Model based on literature review

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **H1** | There is a significant positive relationship between financial aid and price and institution choice decision. | (Ming, 2010) |
| **H2** | There is a significant positive relationship between Location and institution choice decision. | (Ming, 2010) |
| **H3** | There is a significant positive relationship between Future career and institution choice decision | (Ming, 2010) |
| **H4** | There is a significant positive relationship between Program Specific Factor and college choice decisions | (Ming, 2011) |
| **H5** | There is a significant positive relationship between Influences from people and college choice decisions | (Kunwar, 2017) |

# Research Methods

## Quantitative methods

Whereas quantitative research methods gather and represent data in a numeric format which can be put into categories, or in sequential order or other units of measurement, qualitative researchers use a variety of methods to develop how society or people behave according to the consequences (McLeod, 2017). Moreover, quantitative data can be used to construct graphs and table of raw data while qualitative data are analyzed by themes form descriptions by informants. Since this research is limited to a short period of time, dynamic interviewing with many participant samples for data gathering is evidently not a wise choice. Additionally, although quantitative method is concentrated on testing hypothesis and understanding attitudes, qualitative method is driven by the desire to understand the experiences of the research subjects (Kunwar, 2017). Statistics information from quantitative research method help with decision making by summarizing that information. As this research’s aim is to generate a statistical report for the international private institutes which can help to determine the influential factors that should be more emphasize while marketing for new student recruitments, quantitative methods are more appropriate.

## Questionnaire using Survey Method and Sample Collection

Among the different available quantitative methods questionnaire survey method is applied in this research. While there are several different approaches to questionnaire survey method such as structured or semi structured method, structured questionnaire method was applied in this research case. Although questionnaires can also be managed via various different ways such as online medium, phone and paper format. Due to inconveniences of using paper format such as delivering each paper to each person and collecting the sample physically. Online Survey will be used since it is one of the most popular methods and also have a variety of choice such as Google form, surveypal, survey monkey and so on. All selected items are structured questionnaires from the questions provided from the Kunwar, J.B.’s research paper. Likert scale suggested by the literature will be used for this research. As for sample, 100 students from the Gusto Private International College will be delivered questionnaires. Moreover, survey questions of Kunwar, J.B. will not be translated into Burmese assuming that all students who are attending to an international college have a considerate level of English skill.

# Conclusion

The result of the literature review concludes that marketing for education services is essential in this day and age to survive. Moreover, it is convinced that it is not wrong to view the student as the consumer or customer. However, it is vital to comprehend that universities or institutions must go all the approaches to realize what that means. In order to understand the influencing factors to attract students to enroll for the private institutions, hypothesizes are able to generate through this research. In addition, a conceptual model and research methods are also able to produce by combining researches from other papers and Service Marketing Mix model.

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# Appendix 1 Survey Questions for Sample Collection

Below is a list of factors you may have considered while making your choice for the institution you are currently attending or you may consider while applying for further study programs.

## Financial aid and Price

Please rank the importance of each factor in your decision making process by choosing the appropriate level: (1=strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree)

In terms of financial factors, the most important criteria that affects my choice of private institution of higher education in IT related field is: \*

1. Total cost of attending the private institution
2. The cost of living in the area where the institution is located
3. My parent's/guardian's income
4. The extent to which my family would be required to support me
5. Cost of education (tuition fees)
6. Possibilities of financial aid/scholarships/promotion from the institution

## Location

Please rank the importance of each factor in your decision making process by choosing the appropriate level: (1=strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree)

In terms of location of the university, the most important criteria that affects my choice of university is: \*

1. That it is close to the place I am currently living
2. The location of the institution should be convenient
3. The institution should be located in a large city/town
4. Housing and accommodation facilities should be available
5. The city should have a positive image
6. Transport and living costs should be affordable

## Future Career

Please rank the importance of each factor in your decision making process by choosing the appropriate level: (1=strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree) In terms of my future career prospects, the most important criteria that affects my choice of university is: \*

1. I consider the employment rate of graduates
2. I consider whether the further employers will recognize the university
3. There should be career guidance and job placement counseling available at the institution
4. The institution should have strong links to the industry
5. By attending this university, there should be higher future employment opportunities
6. The degree provided by the university is internationally recognized
7. It is easy to get internship placement

## Program Specific Factor

Please rank the importance of each factor in your decision making process by choosing the appropriate level: (1=strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree)

I applied to this specific program because: \*

1. The medium of instruction of the program is in English
2. The program offers flexible study mode
3. This specific program is highly reputed
4. This program is suitable to my individual requirements
5. This program is very specialized in my subject area
6. There are variety of choices offered in the courses offered
7. The program offers lots of exchange programs and other study abroad opportunities
8. The duration of the program is suitable for me
9. It is possible to obtain two degrees (double degree program) simultaneously with this program
10. The course work load is suitable to my abilities

## Influences from people

Please rank the importance of each source in your decision making process by choosing the appropriate level: (0=Not important; 1=Low importance; 3=Moderate importance; 5=Highly important) \*

1. Guidance counselors
2. Teachers
3. Parents
4. Friends
5. Relatives/siblings
6. Alumni of university you are applying to or attending
7. University website
8. Newspapers and magazines