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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 had gradually taken over the place of governmental universities 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 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, 1989) . Those are the two critical decision they had to made which serve as a mile stone for most path of their career life. In addition, most of Myanmar Universities or Colleges are under the control of the Ministry of Education (Hays, 2014). Moreover, 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’s got the lower total mark sum has no chance of joining the institute with higher qualification. 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 influence has also been increasing massively along with the technology. As computers find their way into more and more 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, stakes (interest or share in an enterprise) are becoming more than ever for private colleges 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 objective** of this study is to investigate “factors influencing students' enrollment in IT related programs at International Colleges in Myanmar”.

**The Aim** is to generate a statistical report for the international private institutes which can help to determine the perspectives (influential factors) that should be more emphasize while marketing for new recruitment.

# 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). Hence, this is one of the reason this Descriptive can be used in this research since this research is trying to emphasize the 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). Consequently, 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. Lastly, 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 associated 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 associated 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 providing services that is education services, the matter is that should institutions get involved in marketing or not. Another challenging thing to think through is whether the students should be considered as consumers in the end (Kunwar, 2017). By judging from this, marketing education should not be considered as same as traditional marketing. 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 bought by those who can actually afford it, perhaps, it will not be the best interest of the public if only those who can have enough money to pay education charges would be able to afford education. 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 the most 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 to 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 (Zeithaml, V.A.,Gremler, D. D , & Bitner, M. J.., 2009) which means if the zone of tolerance is less than negative (less than satisfactory level of service), customers are not pleased. In opposition, 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 consists of various variables that an organization can control with the intention of creating a promise of value to be delivered (value proposition) for the customer (Kotler, 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 Extended marketing mix (7Ps) for services (Kotler & Armstrong)

## Variables choice Decision

In this literature review, variables are evaluated based of this “7Ps” and “A Conceptual Framework for institutional factors influencing student’s college choice” (Ming, 2010).

### Financial aid and Price

(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, 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 is 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 college or university location can be a major factor for student’s decision to enroll. Some students may looking for an institution near their hometown for low-cost, convenience, time-efficient and accessibility . (Hays, 2014) states that Campuses in Rangoon and Mandalay were forced to relocate to isolated locations far from city centers due to security concerns. As a result, this have 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 graduate institution they joined 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 universities under control of the Ministry of Education have produced an uneducated generation with no hope for the future and people who want to become school teacher can’t even get training. Paul Watson wrote in Los Angeles Times that “Since 1988, the government has treated universities not as a sources of higher education crucial to the country’s development, but as potential threats to its rule.” (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 specialty 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

**H2**: There is a significant positive relationship between academic programs and college choice decisions (Ming, 2010).

### Influences from people

**H2**: 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.

**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 Conceptual Model based on literature review

# 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

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 and multi-selection suggested by the literature will be used for this research.

# Conclusion