

Market Penetration for Private Universities in ASEAN Countries under AEC

by

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Abstract

Private universities as a college or university often operates as an educational nonprofit organization. It does not receive its primary funding from a state government. Normally, private universities must be accredited by the Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand. According to the Thai Commission on Higher Education's Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, international education in Thailand is an important factor for the economy. Therefore, there would be great opportunity to attract several thousand of international students from overseas especially in the Asean community. To acquire new perspective students from overseas, it was the key challenge and attempt of harmonization of multicultural way in private universities. The research study presented was the implication of AEC affecting on private universities' educational system to penetrate a new market. The objectives of this research study were to: 1) attempt to discover whether private universities engaged in marketing activities to facilitate their enrollment, and 2) criticize a marketing plan including marketing environmental analysis, SWOT analysis, marketing objective/strategy, and marketing implementation to open and seek new market opportunities of perspective students under AEC.

Keywords: Market Penetration, Private University, ASEAN, AEC

1. Introduction

Wikipedia (2016) defined private universities as the universities that are not operated by governments. Many private universities receive tax breaks, public student loans, and grants, depending on their location. Private universities may be subject to government regulation that is in contrast to public universities and national universities. Most private universities, therefore, are non-profit organizations. DHS (2013) identified private universities as a college or university that often operates as an educational nonprofit organization. It does not receive its primary funding from a state government. It is said that private schools generally are smaller than public schools and have smaller class sizes than public schools. Some private schools may have religious affiliations. Private schools usually have a smaller selection of majors but may offer more specialized academic programs. Unlike public universities, it is a college or university primarily funded by a state government. Public colleges and universities generally are larger than private schools and have larger class sizes. In Thailand, both private and public universities should be accredited by the Royal Ministry of Education to award academic degrees.

Normally, private universities must be accredited by the Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand (APHEIT). APHEIT was established in 1979, and is an incorporated non-profit association founded by a group of private higher education institutions in Thailand to establish and promote cooperation among private higher education institutions in the

country. APHEIT is recognized by Ministry of Education in Thailand as one of the organizations that plays an important role in Thailand's university administration. Furthermore, some universities may offer only undergraduate programs, others that are colleges within universities may offer both undergraduate and continuing education. Other 4-year colleges are private institutions and offer undergraduate studies, and 2-year colleges that offer vocational education. All public and private universities and colleges offer program conducted in both Thai and English languages. Some of universities offer higher education conducted in other languages in international program. According to the Thai Commission on Higher Education's Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, international education in Thailand is an important factor for the economy. Not taking into account international schools, universities with these international programs generated 58.2 billion Baht in revenue from them in 2007, up from 52.6 billion Baht and 40.8 billion Baht in 2006 and 2005 respectively. Therefore, there would be great opportunity to attract several thousand of international students from overseas especially in the Asean community.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is a political and economic organization of ten Southeast Asian countries. Since its formation on August 8, 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, the organization's membership has expanded to include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Vietnam. Its principal aims include accelerating economic growth, social progress, and sociocultural evolution among its members, alongside the protection of regional stability and the provision of a mechanism for member countries to resolve differences peacefully (Wikipedia, 2016). Asean covers a land area of 4.4 million square kilometers, 3% of the total land area of Earth. Asean territorial waters cover an area about three times larger than its land counterpart. Member countries have a combined population of approximately 625 million people, 8.8% of the world's population. In 2015, the organization's combined nominal GDP had grown to more than US\$2.8 trillion. It is further detailed by Wikipedia (2016) that if Asean were a single entity, it would rank as the seventh largest economy in the world, behind the USA, China, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and France.

Due to the opportunity in penetrating the Asean market, a number of private universities seek to acquire new perspective students from overseas, it is the key challenge and attempt of harmonization of multicultural way in private universities. The research study presented was the implication of AEC affecting on private universities' educational system to penetrate a new market. The need to market the educational opportunities, resources and services has become more pressing as the private universities have experienced a reduction in its enrollment during the past several quarters. The objectives of this research study were to: 1) attempt to discover whether private universities engaged in marketing activities to facilitate their enrollment, and 2) criticize a marketing plan including marketing environmental analysis, SWOT analysis, marketing objective/strategy, and marketing implementation to open and seek new market opportunities of perspective students under AEC.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theory and Definition

Marketing Penetration

Market penetration refers to the successful selling of a product or service in a specific market, and it is measured by the amount of sales volume of an existing good or service compared to the total

target market for that product or service. Market penetration is the key performance metric for a business growth strategy stemming from the Ansoff Matrix (Richardson, M., & Evans, C. (2007). H. Igor Ansoff first devised and published The Ansoff Matrix in the Harvard Business Review in 1957, within an article titled "Strategies for Diversification." The grid/ matrix is utilized across businesses to help evaluate and determine the next stages the company must take in order to grow, and the risks associated with the chosen strategy. With numerous options available, this matrix helps narrow down the best fit for your organization. This strategy involves selling current products or services into the existing market in order to obtain a higher market share. This could involve persuading current customers to buy more and new customers to start buying or even converting customers from their competitors. This could be implemented using methods such as competitive pricing, increase in marketing communications or utilizing reward systems such as loyalty points/discounts. New Strategies involve utilizing pathways and finding new ways to improve profits, increase sales and productivity, in order to stay relevant and competitive in the long run (Wikipedia, 2016).

Public and Private University

A public school is a college or university primarily funded by a state government. Public colleges and universities generally are larger than private schools and have larger class sizes. At a public school, you will likely have a larger selection of majors than you would at a private school, with both liberal arts classes and specialized programs. While, a private school is a college or university that often operates as an educational nonprofit organization. It does not receive its primary funding from a state government. Private schools generally are smaller than public schools and have smaller class sizes than public schools. Some private schools may have religious affiliations. Private schools usually have a smaller selection of majors but may offer more specialized academic programs.

Education and Marketing

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. The methodology of teaching is called pedagogy. Education is commonly divided formally into such stages as preschool or kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and then college, university, or apprenticeship. A right to education has been recognized by some governments, including at the global level: Article 13 of the United Nations' 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes a universal right to education. In most regions education is compulsory up to a certain age.

Education in Thailand is provided mainly by the Thai government through the Ministry of Education from pre-school to senior high school. A free basic education of twelve years is guaranteed by the constitution, and a minimum of nine years' school attendance is mandatory. In 2009 the Ministry of Education announced the extension of a free, mandatory education to fifteen years. Formal education consists of at least twelve years of basic education, and higher education. Basic education is divided into six years of elementary education and six years of secondary education, the latter being further divided into three years of lower- and upper-secondary levels. Kindergarten levels of pre-elementary education, also part of the basic education level, span 2–3

years depending on the locale, and are variably provided. Non-formal education is also supported by the state. Independent schools contribute significantly to the general education infrastructure. Administration and control of public and private universities are carried out by the Office of Higher Education Commission, a department of the Ministry of Education.

Marketing is the communication between a company and the consumer audience that aims to increase the value of the company or its merchandise, or to raise the profile of the company and its products in the public mind. The purpose of marketing is to induce behavioral change in the receptive audience. The American Marketing Association has defined marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." The techniques used in marketing include choosing target markets through market analysis and market segmentation, as well as understanding methods of influence on the consumer behavior. From a societal point of view, marketing provides the link between a society's material requirements and its economic patterns of response. This way marketing satisfies these needs and wants through the development of exchange processes and the building of long-term relationships. In the case of nonprofit organization marketing, the aim is to deliver a message about the organization's services to the applicable audience. Governments often employ marketing to communicate messages with a social purpose, such as a public health or safety message, to citizens.

Asean Economic Community

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has made extraordinary progress since it was founded in 1967. It has been transformed into an increasingly well-regulated, dynamic and creative platform for trade and commerce across what many regard as the world's fastest-developing economic region. ASEAN's Member States comprise Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The year 2015 is a key milestone in the ASEAN integration agenda. Economically, ASEAN as a region has achieved significant progress and prosperity. GDP has nearly doubled since 2007 (when the AEC Blueprint was first adopted) to the present, with a combined GDP of over US\$2.5 trillion, while average GDP per capita grew by almost 80% to over US\$4,000. Over the same period, ASEAN has also become more influential, with widening markets regionally and globally. By 2014, it is Asia's 3rd largest, the world's 7th largest, and among the most advanced integrated markets. With a combined population of over 622 million, ASEAN has a vast consumer base, behind only China and India globally. Over 50% of ASEAN's population is under the age of 30, making up a large portion of both the current and future workforce.

2.2 Literature Survey

Chapman (1981) maintained that college choice was influenced by student characteristics as well as by external influences. Student characteristics included two major determinants of choice: socioeconomic status and academic performance. External influences ranged from the involvement of significant persons (friends, parents, and high school personnel), college characteristics (location, cost, and availability of the program), and attempts of the college to communicate with prospective students (written information, campus visits, printed recruitment materials, and other activities). College characteristics became the main focus of several studies that followed.

Cerny (1992) conducted a study comparing schools with written marketing plans and those without written plans by measuring against the attainment of their enrollment goals. The results suggested that schools and colleges should have a carefully written marketing plan in order to pursue the goal of increased enrollment. In the study, Cerny divided schools into four groups according to how actively they engaged in marketing strategies and how well they laid out their plan. The groups were termed laggards, traditionalist, promotionalists, and marketers. The traditionalists were those schools who were highly competitive and well established in image and reputation. They reported having used a minimal number of marketing strategies. The marketers employed written marketing strategies and reported achieving a better than 80% enrollment goal. The marketers were found to be the most successful when reputation and image factors were controlled. Promotionalists were those who used some marketing strategies but who lacked a clear direction of where they were heading. They had difficulty being competitive. Laggards were not marketing oriented and were far lower in achieving their enrollment goals.

Webb (1993) studied graduate business student's college-choice criteria. She found that students identified 15 major college-choice factors: academic reputation, accreditation, evening classes, programs, and potential degree marketability, part-time programs, completion time, proximity of the college location to home, tuition, books, fees, faculty contact time, location, library size, reputation in the community, parking, and placement reputation.

Meehan (1993) studied students who chose to enter teacher's education in the north-eastern provinces of Thailand. She found that academic achievement, family wealth, occupation, and education were the major indicators that determined students' self perception. Students later used their self-perceptions to choose their future careers or education. The study concluded that their choices were also based on academic achievement, parents' education, parents' income, peer influence, college location, and program availability.

Absher and Crawford (1996) took a step further by attempting to identify market segmentation among community college students. They surveyed students at four community colleges in northern Alabama. The survey asked students to rate 29 factors that influences their choice of that particular college. The students were later segmented into groups according to their responses to these factors. The four groups identified by Absher and Crawford were: the practical-minded, advice seekers, Joe college, good timers, and warm friendly. The study concluded that the highest ratings for the 29 selection variables were overall quality of the education, types of academic programs, tuition and fees, overall reputation, and faculty qualifications.

Kotler and Fox (1995) pointed out that schools rely heavily on mass-media advertising and telemarketing to attract students. They also suggested that private vocational schools suffer from an image problem because they have focused more on profit than on delivering customer value, which is one aspect marketing attempts to solve. Vocational education in Thailand, especially in the private sector, is less desired by students than public education. Because of its nature as skill-oriented training, vocational education is not highly respected compared to general education. They also proposed six stages in the evolution of marketing at educational institutions. The evolution starts from the notion that marketing is unnecessary for education and progresses through the beliefs that marketing is promotion, marketing is segmentation, marketing is positioning, marketing is strategic planning, and marketing is enrollment management. These stages offer a framework through which to explore the understanding and use of marketing among educational institutions. They can be used to categorize and explain the ways in which educational institutions apply any marketing techniques.

Catri and Barrick (1996) studied the marketing plan and the effectiveness of marketing in the Ohio Vocational Educational Planning District (VEPD). The study investigated the VEPD superintendents' perceptions of their role in marketing secondary vocational education and its perceived effectiveness with regard to customer philosophy, strategic marketing planning, and operational efficiency. The largest groups of the superintendents responded positively to their roles in marketing functions but were undecided about the effectiveness of their efforts. The study recommended in-service education for administrators of the VEPD to provide them with a technical framework for helping the VEPD develop its marketing effectiveness.

Jivasantikarn (2003) stated that education in Thailand is expected to shift from a sellers' market to a buyer's market. Students and parents will enjoy a range of opportunities to choose an educational institution without having to be overly concerned about affordability. However, public and private schools will be competing for higher enrollment to receive higher amounts of per capita subsidies. Moreover, the new educational law will give public higher educational institutions the authority and autonomy to undergo privatizations. Private vocational schools will have to compete in two markets, the upper-secondary level and higher education. It is a difficult task to accomplish, and they will have to work hard to survive the new buyers' market.

3. Marketing Plan for Private University

An exemplary case study was selected and named as Sripatum University. Its mission statement identifies the responsibility to determine student needs and set priorities for the use of college resources to achieve the outcomes. As stated in the mission statement, the institution works with its partners to provide a variety of educational opportunities, including:

- Courses and training for university and college transfer
- Occupational and technical programs
- Basic skills and developmental education
- Pre-employment and customized training for local business and industry
- Support services for students

The marketing plan of Sripatum University identifies the importance of analyzing and improving "its various approaches to develop a comprehensive plan which includes developing annual marketing goals and objectives as well as identifies marketing strategies and tools needed to share information about college resources. The need to market the institution's educational opportunities, resources and services has become more pressing as the college has experienced a reduction in its enrollment during the past several quarters. Because enrollment is linked directly to funding, the major challenge is to increase enrollments. Marketing has been identified as a method for increasing student enrollment through targeting underserved populations, improving the image of the institution, and to increase awareness.

3.1 Analysis

Sripatum University (SPU) is one of the oldest private universities in Bangkok, Thailand. Dr. Sook Pookayaporn established the university in 1970 under the name of Thai Suriya College. In 1987, the college was promoted to university status by the Ministry of University Affairs, and has since been known as Sripatum University. "Sripatum" means the "Source of Knowledge Blooming Like a Lotus" and was conferred on the college by Her Royal Highness, the Princess Mother Srinagarindra (Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Baromarajan). She presided over the official opening

ceremony of SPU and awarded vocational certificates to the first three graduating classes. Sripatum University is therefore one of the first five private universities of Thailand. In 2002, Sripatum University was accredited by the International Standards Organization (ISO9001:2000) for both undergraduate and graduate programs. Furthermore, Sripatum University offers 10 Schools & 6 Colleges, and its Sripatum International College offers 8 international academic programs taught in English: International Business Management, International Hospitality Management- A joint academic program with SHML in Switzerland, International Logistic & Supply Chain Management, Airline Business, Media & Marketing Communication, Accountancy, Business Chinese - A dual-degree with Beijing Language & Culture University, PR. China, Thai Studies.

Environmental Analysis

1. The Marketing Environment

Competitive forces include the draw of four year institutions including state and private universities. Students are enticed by programs offered by the larger community and technical colleges. Private universities in Bangkok seem more attractive to students especially Bangkok University, Rangsit University, or University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, or other universities nearby

Economic forces include a business dominated community that is primarily urban with communities separated by great distances with a population challenged by incomes lower than the province average, and where social, economic and educational isolation is a concern. Many of the students commute distances of 10 and sometimes 20 kilometers one way to attend university. In addition, tuition prices continue to increase and are out distancing financial aid re-imbusement. The university is currently experiencing lower enrollment which may be attributed to an improved economy and the need for some students to work to provide financial support for their families.

Political forces include competition with other governmental agencies for limited tax. The province funding model ties revenue directly to enrollment with, country funds are shrinking due to economy recession.

Legal and regulatory forces continue to govern assessment and accountability. The institution's need to meet institutional and program accreditation standards continues to be an item that requires much attention and effort.

Technological forces include the need to meet technology improvements in equipment and software to enhance university operations and the need to keep the equipment and instruction updated in professional programs. The institutions connectivity to broadband access continues to be an advantage to the institution and the community to help promote training opportunities.

2. Target Market

Target market includes high school graduates, non-high school graduates, worker retraining, displaced workers, underserved populations, and training for industry employees to improve skills.

SWOT Analysis

1. Strengths

- SPU is one of the higher education institutions accredited by the Office of the National Education Commission.
- The university has a low student/teacher ratio which provides more attention to individual students.
- SPU has good facilities with good technological support.
- SPU athletics programs provides a positive image, garners institutional support from the community, helps solidify the university community, and helps recruit students from both within and outside of the district.
- Many of the university faculty members have a Doctorate in their major course work area.
- The university has nationally recognized programs offering industry certifications.
- Broadband computer access and good technical support.
- Employment rates are high for professional program completers.
- The institution hosts a culturally diverse student body.
- The institution is centrally located in its service district.

2. Weaknesses

- There is a lack of qualified full-time instructors in the university.
- The university is located in an urban area where population is extremely condense and some students from outlying communities must travel through a major traffic jam in the morning and evening time.
- Due to limited staff, many academic employees have several teaching responsibilities with limited time to be creative.
- Rapid growth of the institution is limited by the university small area.
- Although the university is attempting to reach out and serve a large international programs, the number of staff who are fluent in English is small, especially in graduate levels.

3. Opportunities

- The institution has several intellectual properties related to technology including high speed band width connectivity to the internet. Through broadband capabilities the university is providing distance learning to off campus sites such as Cholburi or Khonkhaen.
- The institution is flexible and creative in responding to employer needs.
- The ability to partnership and develop and market articulation agreements with public and private four year institutions.
- Several opportunities for expanding services to students and increasing enrollment have been identified through grant funding.
- The SPU Foundation is supportive through providing scholarships and funding for special events, equipment and facilities.
- The institution has the opportunity to target high school graduates as a renewable source of students.
- There is an opportunity to increase enrollment by reaching out to non-high school graduates.

4. Threats

- The continual increase in tuition rates.
- The cost of transportation (increasing fuel prices).
- Competition of online course from other institutions.
- Declining overall enrollment in university programs.

Matching Strengths to Opportunities/Converting Weaknesses and Threats

- SPU is centrally located more effort can be made to make residents aware of educational opportunities and emphasize the cost savings for students.
- The university's broadband access, strong technical capabilities and the SPU Internet portal can be used to expand distance learning opportunities and offset the rising cost of transportation.
- Because SPU is a smaller institution with smaller classes and many instructors who have their Doctorate, the university can promote the additional attention that students receive in their classes and instructional expertise.
- Reach out to the new employers in the university to provide continuing education opportunities and needed employee training.
- Develop activities that promote student retention to increase student enrollment.

Marketing Objectives

1. Increase enrollment by small percentage for 2016-2017 using 2015 enrollment as a baseline.
 - A three year goal is to increase 2015 enrollment numbers by 10%.
 - Reduce barriers to enrollment and retention for non-traditional, at-risk and special populations by increasing the retention rate to approximately 80%.
2. Increase community awareness of SPU (increasing public awareness of the thinking, voting public including the innovators and influencers) through the promotion of educational opportunities, skill training as measured by surveys and focus groups.
3. Increase the variety and effectiveness of promotional efforts.
 - Create new and improved forms of marketing and techniques which may include Web banner advertising and event driven promotions.
 - Develop event driven promotions.
4. Link marketing efforts to new program and new course development and to program modifications.
5. Market training opportunities to international agencies.

Marketing Strategies

Target Market 1:

High schools including home schooled students and private high schools. Appeal to and involved the parents of prospective students.

- Products: Academic transfer and professional/technical programs
- Price: Prevailing tuition
- Place: On-campus, extension sites, online, and E-learning classes
- Promotion: High School counselor on SPU campus, running start brochures, and advertisement in print and radio & TV targeted at parents.

Target Market 2:

Non-traditional students

- Product: Professional/technical programs
- Price: Tuition, fees, supplies, and tools
- Place: On campus, extended sites, clinical sites, and work based learning sites
- Promotion: Host a summer camp show casing non-traditional careers

Target Market 3:

Workforce retraining population (individuals that are working but need skill development or degrees to progress)

- Product: Professional/technical programs
- Price: Tuition and program fees
- Place: Campus and online
- Promotion: promotional activities, vocational week, career fairs, brochures, work place visitations, class schedules, and web page links to specific programs

Target Market 4:

Current students for retention

- Products: Academic transfer, professional/technical programs
- Price: SPU Foundation scholarships; financial aid funds & awards
- Place: On-campus, online, and E-learning classes
- Promotion: Promotion of long-distance commuters; events and short workshops to promote retention including - completing applications for scholarships and financial aid

Target Market 5:

International groups/agencies

- Product: Contract training and educational opportunities for international students
- Price: Tuition, contract fees, books, program fees, and housing costs

- Place: Campus and/or international sites
- Promotion: International education fairs, international educational catalogs, and the development of a more user friendly and informative web page

Target Market 6:

Business and industry training

- Product: Promote customized training opportunities or a training partner.
- Price: Training prices for the most part will be at or slightly lower than industry averages.
- Place: SPU will be able to offer its facility and others on campus, or conduct training on customer premises.
- Promotion: Partner in promotion with the Thai Chambers of Commerce, direct sales of products to potential clients, or monthly newsletter via email.

Marketing Implementation

The marketing committee has primary responsibility for creating and implementing the marketing plan, and will meet on a quarterly basis to monitor activities. Spending and activities will be reviewed and documented by the marketing committee on an annual basis to evaluate and analyze effectiveness of activities and to formulate new activities for the coming year.

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