ABSTRACT

Educational institutions need to understand where they stand and what their strengths against the others are. On this basis, universities should understand students' perception towards the university based on the choice attributes, in other words, the students' perception of the strongest and the weakest attribute of the university. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine important university-choice attributes that high school students use in viewing the universities for Bachelor degree program are:

1. To assess the important factors that students in international schools used as the attributes in understanding their perception.
2. To identify the difference between the demographic factors of the students and their perception towards the universities.
3. To identify the relationship between the university-choice attributes and the perception of students toward the listed international universities in Bangkok.

The universities offering international programs that this research focused on were Mahidol University, Assumption University, Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University and Bangkok University. The result of this study was obtained by conducting a survey with the sample size of 277 respondents. The target population is the international school students in the last year of school who were seeking information on international universities in Bangkok in which they wish to continue their studies. Therefore the methodology used for this research to gather the primary data was a survey, a research technique in which information was gathered from a sample of people by use of a questionnaire. The process of primary data collection took approximately 2 weeks, from June 22, 2006 till the July 2, 2006.

The researcher found out that there is no difference between age and the perception of students towards Mahidol and Chulalongkorn universities. Perhaps because the two are old and well-known institutions, students of all ages saw them as offering the same quality. However, high school students of different age, showed different perception towards the international programs at Assumption, Thammasat and Bangkok universities. This could be because the latter group offers a vast range of programs in English ranging from Engineering to Business Administration. Further

more, the results showed that there is no significant difference between students' gender and their perception towards any of the five universities. However, there is a difference between students' nationality and their perception towards Chulalongkorn and Bangkok universities. That means, students with different nationality have different opinion towards the 2 universities.

All the 6 factors used in the research (reputation of institutions, cost of education, proximity to home, degree including content and structure, physical facilities and family & friends' recommendation) have a positive relationship with all the five international universities in term of students' perception. However, the result also indicated that the relationship between all the university attributes and the students' perception towards the five universities are positively weak or just moderate. The rationale behind this result is that students in Bangkok have access to many more options in terms of international schools and universities as compared to the past.

The researcher recommended that the universities can use one of the three strategies in strengthening the students' perception towards the universities based on the six university attributes; which are; modifying the university, altering perceptions of the university or calling attention to neglected attributes.

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