A Study of Marketing and Advertising Strategies of Academic Organizations in Taiwan Adult Learning

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ABSTRACT

The birthrate declined, but the number of the universities increased. Many schools faced the decrease of students, and teachers had the difficulties to find jobs. Recruiting students became the big challenge for schools, especially for education program. Therefore, in order to compete effectively, ascertaining how to successfully attract and recruit students to the program has become an important part of successfully maintaining education programs.

The purpose of this research was to determine what advertising strategies were effective and which marketing approach was optimal for the institution to use when promoting its education program. Moreover, the study can be used to help determine the relationship between advertising strategies, marketing approach, and the demographic profile of adult learners. This research will assist institutions in develop practical strategies for effectively recruiting adult learners to choose the respective program offered by the respective institution.

Various advertising and marketing strategies were analyzed in this study. The random sampling technique was used to achieve more reliable results. The Education Marketing (Kuo, 2004) was the instrument used in this research. The t-test, the Mann-Whitney U test, the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance and the Pearson Correlation Coefficients were used to analyze the data (Frankel & Wallen, 2006).

The results of the study indicated:
(1) The most popular and effective advertising strategy was media advertising, followed by oral advertising, then advertising recognition.
(2) Most participants considered the orientation consultant before they joined an education program.
(3) There was only one demographic characteristic of the participants that affected their opinions about the advertising strategies used, namely marital status. But the difference of gender, age, and occupation also affected the advertising recognition of the participants.

Before the schools create the plan, they should do a sound analysis of all variables and the target groups in order to make a successful strategy to recruit students. Hence, the finding of the study could provide useful and practical information to help Taiwanese education to design better and more effective strategies to help the schools to recruit more students.

Keywords: Academic organization, Marketing Strategies, Advertising Strategies, Adult Education.
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the population structure of Taiwan has experienced some big changes. The birthrate declined from 412,779 newborn babies in 1981 to approximately 200,000. This phenomenon challenged the operation of the Taiwanese education system. The birthrate decreased, but the number of the universities and colleges increased. In response to demographic trends and in support of the government’s focus, many schools started to build and promote adult education programs. In order to effectively increase revenues and compete with the numerous other institutions in Taiwan, the advertising and marketing strategies became a primary focus for schools to recruit students and increase the revenues. In response, many universities and colleges started to pay closer attention to effective strategies for advertising the schools differentiation, strengths and methods for attracting and successfully recruiting adult learners to go back to school (www.edu.tw, Retrieved May. 23, 2008).

Hence, the purpose of this study was to find out what advertising and marketing strategies were effective in recruiting adult students in Taiwanese universities and colleges specifically from the adult learners’ perspective. In addition, the study helped to identify possible correlations to the relationship between advertising and marketing strategies and the demographic backgrounds of adult learners. Although the results were not generalizable, the information is now available to use as a basis for helping schools plan practical strategies and useful programs to attract adult learners. In addition, the findings of the study can help universities and colleges save time and therefore money in recruiting students because they have a foundation with which to start, specific to education program.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the most effective advertising strategy for education programs used by colleges and universities in adult education?
2. How do people feel about the marketing strategies for education program currently used by colleges and universities in adult education?
3. Is there a relationship between the demographic backgrounds of the participants, the advertising strategies, and the marketing strategies for education program in adult education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The steps of planning strategies for educational marketing used almost the same theories, except the first step of Deng’s study (Kuo, 2004; Wang, 2003). Many of the research studies used the 4P marketing strategy, namely product, price, promotion, and place (Brown, 1984; Deng, 1998; Huang, 1997; Kuo, 2004; Wang, 2003). In this research, the steps of planning the strategy for educational marketing of education program used Huang’s steps as the foundation, and also used other literature to assist in the research process. The steps for this research were to find the marketing segmentation. Also, based on the theory of customer behavior, the research process used the marketing mix to check the quality of instructors, classes, pricing, location, equipment, and information (Deng, 1998; Huang, 1997; Kuo, 2004).
METHODOLOGY

The instrument of the Education Marketing in adult education (Kuo, 2004) was used in this research. The instrument used a five-point Likert-type scale. This instrument had stability reliability and internal consistency reliability. Moreover, the validities of this instrument were content validity and construct validity.

The population of the study was students who enrolled in the adult education courses in the Taiwanese university which the researcher chosen for the study. According to the university, there were 902 students enrolled in the adult education in 2008 (www.au.edu.tw, Retrieved August 17, 2008). The population was 902. According to Leedy (1997), the power size of sampling was 274 participants. Therefore, in order to have a valid amount of effective surveys, the researcher had 350 participants.

The random sampling technique was used, because the researcher wanted each of the population participants to have an equal chance to participate. The two stage random sampling techniques were used in this study.

The survey was conducted by the researcher and a tester. The consent forms were signed by the author of the instrument, the university, and the participants. The SPSS for windows was used to analyze the data. The t-test, the Mann-Whitney U test, and the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance and the Pearson Correlation Coefficients were also used to analyze the data (Frankel & Wallen, 2006).

RESULTS

There were a total of 350 surveys that were sent out. The researcher checked every survey, and the 300 surveys were appropriate to be used in the study. The return rate was 85.6%.

Q: How Do People Feel About the Marketing Strategies?

In this study, the research used Kuo’s definition (2004), which considered three factors in the marketing strategies, namely the orientation consultant, price consideration, and professional skill. The results showed that most participants considered the orientation consultant first when they tried to join an education program. The orientation consultant in this study included the attitude of the consultant, how they introduced the program, and how they represented the program. For the participants, the first impression was important. If the schools wanted to recruit more students, they should invest resources to train and educate their orientation consultants in order to increase the level of satisfaction that students gain from taking the education courses. Moreover, after the orientation consultant (mean= 19.38), the rank was followed by professional skills (mean= 19.33), and then price consideration (mean= 18.36).

It should be noted that the mean of the three strategies were very close. The mean of the orientation consultant was 19.38. The mean for the professional skills and price consideration were 19.33 and 18.36. The findings indicated that the participants thought that professional skills and price consideration were also important. Hence, the schools might still need to pay attention to professional skills and price consideration. By improving professional skills of the instructors and setting a reasonable price, it would meet the needs that students feel are important and address their preferences, thus attracting more students to the program.

Moreover, by using the t-test, the results showed that the gender differences of the participants did not affect their opinions about the marketing strategies. The α value of the orientation consultant, price consideration, and professional skills were .474, .191, and .905. The α values were all above the target of
α = .05. Hence, the gender of the participants did not affect the opinions toward preferred marketing strategies.

The results showed that the differences in the marital status of participants did not affect their opinions about the orientation consultant (α=.858 >α=.05), the price consideration (α=.900 >α=.05), and the professional skills (α=.533 >α=.05). Therefore, the findings indicated that whether or not the participant was married did not affect the opinions toward the marketing strategies. When the schools implement marketing strategies, they might not need to consider the marital status of the participants or incorporate a strategy into their plan with consideration to this characteristic since the findings showed that this demographic variable is not significant.

Q: Is There A Relationship Between the Demographic Backgrounds, the Advertising Strategies and the Marketing Strategies for education Program in Adult Education?

The Advertising Strategies

By using the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance to test the data, the results showed that there was no significant relationship between adult learner’s preferred advertising strategies and gender (p=.32 > p=.05), age (p=.052 > p=.05), educational level (p=.219 > p=.05), jobs (p=.334 > p=.05), personal income (p=.062 > p=.05), and location where the participants lived(p=.985 > p=.05). Hence, the differences in gender, age, educational level, jobs, personal income, and location where the participants lived did not affect the opinions of the participants about the preferred advertising strategies.

For advertising recognition, the findings indicated that for advertising recognition, gender (p=.006 ≤ p=.05), age (p=.004 ≤ p=.05), and jobs (p=.025 ≤ p=.05) had significant relationships. Hence, the difference of gender, age, and jobs affected how the participants experienced advertising recognition. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between adult learner’s preferred advertising strategies and marital status (p=.046 ≤ p=.05). This also meant that the participants’ marital status affected the opinions about which advertising strategies were effective.

There was only one demographic background of the participants that affected participants’ opinions about advertising strategies, namely marital status. But the difference of gender, age, and jobs also affected the ideas of the participants about advertising recognition.

The Marketing Strategies

Moreover, the results showed that there was no significant relationship between adult learner’s preferred marketing strategies, gender (p=.916 > p=.05), age (p=.688 > p=.05), educational level (p=.395 > p=.05), jobs (p=.684 > p=.05), personal income (p=.979 > p=.05), marital status (p=.607 > p=.05), and location where the participants lived (p=.311 > p=.05). So the difference of gender, age, educational level, jobs, personal income, marital status, and location where the participants lived did not affect the participants feeling about marketing strategies.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

There were several findings in this study, and these findings can be used to help schools to create useful and practical strategies to recruit more adult learners to education programs.

The first finding was that the most popular and effective advertising strategy was media advertising, followed by oral advertising, and advertising recognition. Hence, the findings indicated that media advertising could be the best choice for schools to attract students. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, schools should focus on utilizing media advertising as the most effective means of recruiting
students. However, based on Lin’s research (2003), people focused on oral advertising, such as the suggestion from friends, or introduction of a product by relatives. The finding difference could be due to the difference in participant characteristics, different instruments used to survey study participants, and so on. However, both findings are still valuable and can be used as a basis for future education adult education marketing and advertising strategies. The schools would determine which study is more appropriate by identifying what different information pertains to their specific target market and choose the basis of marketing and advertising plans accordingly.

The next finding was that most participants considered the orientation consultant first when they considered joining an education program. The orientation consultant in this study included the attitude of the consultant, how they introduced the program, and how they represented the program. For the participants, the first impression was important. The orientation consultant in this study included the attitude of the consultant, how they introduced the program, and how they represented the program. For the participants, the first impression was important. If the schools wanted to recruit more students, they should invest resources to train and educate their orientation consultants in order to increase the level of satisfaction that students gain from taking the sports education courses. Moreover, after the orientation consultant (mean= 19.38), the rank was followed by professional skills (mean= 19.33), and then price consideration (mean= 18.36).

It should be noted that the mean of the three strategies were very close. The mean of the orientation consultant was 19.38. The mean for the professional skills and price consideration were 19.33 and 18.36. The findings indicated that the participants thought that professional skills and price consideration were also important. Hence, the schools might still need to pay attention to professional skills and price consideration. By improving professional skills of the instructors and setting a reasonable price, it would meet the needs that students feel are important and address their preferences, thus attracting more students to the program.

Moreover, Chen’s study (2004) indicated that price consideration was one major issue for people as a decision factor for joining an education program. Hence, the findings of the study were aligned with Chen’s study (2004). Based of the findings of these studies, when schools try to plan marketing strategies, they should pay attention to setting up reasonable prices or making participation as affordable as possible, in order to attract more people.

The next finding indicated that there was only one demographic background of the participants that affected participants’ opinions about the advertising strategies, namely marital status. But the difference of gender, age, and jobs also affected the ideas of the participants about the advertising recognition. In Kuo’s study (2004), it also pointed out that the gender difference affected how people felt about advertising strategies. Hence, when the schools focus on advertising recognition, they should pay attention to the difference of gender, age, and job type of the target group, because these demographic variables might affect how the target group felt. Also these variables will affect the success of the advertising recognition approach. Moreover, single or married status of the target group might also affect the outcome of the advertising strategies. Based on these findings, the schools should consider the marital status factor into their plan.

In regards to the marketing strategies, demographic background variables of the participants did not affect their feelings about marketing strategies, namely gender, age, the education level, job type, marriage, income, and location. Hence, when schools create a marketing plan, based on the findings of this study, demographic background variables of the participants should not be considered in the plan.
CONCLUSIONS

The finding of the study could provide useful information to Taiwanese schools and help them to plan a marketing and advertising strategy that identifies effective methods for recruiting Taiwanese university students. By using the suggestions which were developed from the results of the study, schools should save time and money in designing effective advertising and marketing strategies. This study could also provide direction for schools to design research studies that can build upon the findings of this research to create effective strategies that are tailored to the respective school. Moreover, the findings indicated that media advertising might be the most effective advertising approach, so the schools could take this into consideration when creating an advertising plan. In addition, the results showed that the relationship between demographic background variables could affect whether advertising and marketing strategies are effective. Hence, before schools create an advertising and marketing plan, they should do an in-depth analysis of all demographic variables of the target group in order to construct a successful advertising and marketing strategy to recruit students. Overall, the findings of the study could provide useful and practical information to help Taiwanese education programs to design better and more effective strategies to help the schools to recruit more students for education programs.

REFERENCES


