

ABSTRACT

Marketing is an ever evolving field. One of its biggest developments during the last decades is the introduction of the Integrated Marketing Communications or IMC. For educational institutions like universities, the focus of IMC is towards the students as the main source for the marketing communications. Relying on two-way communications to create and strengthen the relationships that exist between a university and its students, IMC emphasizes the use of many different communication tools, especially the internet, to synchronize communication. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding on how IMC is used in universities and how it connects to students.

To achieve this purpose, research questions focusing on the university objectives and students' benefits, messages, and the tools of IMC were used. To answer the research questions, a review of literature was collected, resulting in a conceptual framework. Methodologically, personal interviews with Siam University IMBA students were conducted with the aims to measure their different perceptions towards the department's marketing tools, their decision-making tendencies towards the university's IMBA program, and the effectiveness of the university's IMC involving marketing mix (4Ps).

SPSS program was used to show what factors could be the key to the success on collecting enrollees in the academic year 2011- 2012. Following careful analysis, the findings indicate that different university objectives generate different benefits for their students, but the objectives must fit the overall strategy of the university. The structure and execution of messages in IMC is very essential. Different types of messages have different uses and can be effective in certain situations. The important part is to use the students' preferences as a guide when creating them. The choice of communication tools and the synchronization between them is also of great importance. There are many diverse tools that lead to different advantages but together they must convey a desirable image of the university to the customer. Overall, the use of IMC and well executed marketing communications is a shortcut to better relationships between a university and its students.

The findings of this research show that the marketing tools have influenced 80% of the students in making decision to enroll into Siam University IMBA program. In addition, at least 90% of the students from the sample group are satisfied with the Siam University IMBA department's marketing mix. Also, using SPSS program to conclude the findings we found that contents in the advertisements and scholarship offering of the Siam University IMBA program played an important role for the increasing number of students between the academic year 2010 and 2011. The purpose of this thesis was "to gain a deeper understanding of how IMC is used in universities" and this section contains a number of suggestions for universities using IMC or universities that simply want to use a customer-based approach. The implications are derived from the empirical data, analysis, and the discussion done in this research.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Marketing Mix, Communication Tools,