

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING ON PUBLIC UNIVERSITY CHOICE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT IN THE EASTERN REGION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to (1) develop a relationships model among integrated marketing communication and decision making on public university choice of an undergraduate student in the eastern and (2) validate a relationships model among integrated marketing communication and decision making on public university choice of an undergraduate student in the eastern. This research applied Mixed Methods. The instrument was an online questionnaire. The sample consisted of 400 undergraduate students in the eastern by multi-stage random sampling. The reliability coefficient (α) of the research instrument was equal to .95. Descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS; causal modeling involved the use of AMOS. The result of this research found out the relationships model among integrated marketing communication and decision making on public university choice of an undergraduate student in the eastern was consistent with the empirical data. Goodness of fit statistics were: chi-square test=9.75, $df=12$, $p=.64$, $TLI=1.00$, $CFI=1.00$, $RMR=.03$, $RMSEA=.00$ and relative chi-square=.81. The variables in the model accounted for 94 percent of the total variance of decision-making on public university choice. In conclusion, the integrated marketing communication had a positive direct effect to decision making on public university choice of an undergraduate student in the eastern region with 0.97 effect size at a significant level .01.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Decision Making, Public University, Relationships Model

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are a total of 155 universities in Thailand, which can be categorized according to educational institutions of both the public and private sectors as follows; 26 autonomous universities, 57 public universities, and 72 private universities. (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2021). Each institution accepts students to study in the university in a different way for each institution, has different faculties to study, as well as the reputation and prominence of the faculties in the field of study. Each institution is different as well. As for the faculties that are currently accepting items in each institution, there has been an increase. Some faculties offer teaching with new knowledge in some institutions. And there are different ways of accepting students and new ways of recruiting them all the time as well. In the eastern region, there are well-known public and private universities, resulting in higher competition among higher education institutions or universities. The courses offered by each institution may be similar or similar to support economic expansion and educational liberalization resulting in the rapid expansion of educational institutions and the change in the number of learners, which Due to the change in population structure affecting higher education institutions or universities in the eastern region to adjust strategies for self-development in various fields, whether it be curricula, teaching, teacher quality, using technology in

management, increasing research results that affect social development and international recognition, and maintaining its uniqueness to build reputation and quality for the institution.

Therefore, to compete with the country's top universities all the time, it is necessary to come up with strategies to attract public university admissions decisions by organizing various activities and public relations such as participating in program flea markets, Organizing traffic guidance activities or guidance through the website. And many more channels have been organized to introduce the university to students to be more interested in deciding to study further. These are decisions made through the use of a variety of tools. Therefore, the researcher is interested in implementing Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which is one of the tools commonly used by business organizations. These include advertising, public relations, sales promotions, events, the use of salespeople, and direct marketing as a tool for the university to communicate to students about the activities of the university. and led to the creation of small, medium, and large strategies with a greater focus on applying a marketing tool called integrated marketing communication principles to business education. This is to encourage students to react to the activities of the university to make students satisfied and have behavior in choosing to study at a public university.

From the role and importance of integrated marketing communication influencing students' decision to study in the state university in the eastern region. This research aims to develop a model of the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the eastern region as well as testing the invariance of parameters in the developed correlation model. Studying in the context of a public university of students in the eastern region, which is one of the country's major economic and business centers of education, has a large number of public and private universities and their branches. Under the change in behavioral decision to choose education according to the modern era and relatively high competition. The results obtained from such research, besides being useful in academics, can also be used in formulating guidelines and formulating appropriate marketing promotion strategies, and to encourage both universities and students to consider the value of education as a priority.

Objectives

- 1) To develop a model of the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the eastern region.
- 2) To examine the coherence of the correlation model between the integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in the State University of the Eastern region students developed with the empirical data.

METHODOLOGY

This research is Mixed Methods research between qualitative and quantitative research, by Instrument-Development Design based on Edmonds and Kennedy's research design methodology (2017) which has been approved for human research ethics of Kasetsart University in the research project code KUREC-SS64/147. The methods for conducting research are as follows:

- 1) Population and Sample in Research
 - i. The population is students who are studying in higher education at public universities in the eastern region, covering 7 provinces, namely Prachin Buri, Sa Kaeo, Chachoengsao, Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Trat.
 - ii. The sample consisted of 7 provinces, namely Prachinburi Province, Sa Kaeo Province, Chachoengsao Province, Chonburi Province, Rayong Province, Chanthaburi Province, and Trat Province. Determining the sample size for which the exact population is unknown. The researcher then used the calculation method using W.G. Cochran formula (1953) at 95% confidence level with error $\pm 5\%$ A sample size of

- 385 was obtained, but the researchers collected 400 pieces of data to prevent sample loss, using the Multi-stage Random Sampling method.
- 2) The research tool was the online questionnaire consisting of Part 1, the general information online questionnaire was survey-like. Part 2, an online questionnaire about integrated marketing communication. It is a 5-level rating scale and part 3, an online questionnaire about the decision to study. It is a 5-level rating scale. The researchers used questionnaires to assess the quality of the tools: (1) the revised questionnaire was presented to 3 experts to examine the content validity of the questionnaires and terminology definitions; Language use and coverage of the content to be measured and to verify the content validity (Item Content Validity Index: I-CVI) (Ayre & Scally, 2014) found an I-CVI value between 0.83. –1.00. And (2) the instrumental trials were conducted on 30 non-realistic populations whose assessment results were classified between 0.40–0.87 and questionnaire confidence was determined by Cronbach's method (1951), in which the results The confidence assessment has a confidence value of 0.95.
 - 3) Data collection by the researcher submitting the link and QR Code of the online questionnaire. Researchers applying for a gmail.com account to those who are ready and express their consent to cooperate in completing the online questionnaire. If a response is not received within 6 days for any reason such as a notification that the researcher's messages have been read but no response has been received. The researcher will use the alternate username to forward with a message inviting to answer the online questionnaire and after the due date for data collection. The researchers examined the online questionnaire of students pursuing tertiary education at a public university in the Eastern Region that the online questionnaires received were completely accurate from the online questionnaire. Then the questionnaire with the complete answer was selected, found a complete answer of 400 people, representing 100%.
 - 4) Data analysis consists of data analysis divided into 3 parts: (1) preliminary data analysis to know the characteristics of the samples. The distribution of variables (2) analyzed the correlation coefficient between the observed variables of the model of the relationship between the integrated marketing communication and the decision to study at a public university among students in the eastern region, and (3) To verify the congruence of the Structural Equation Model based on research hypothesis with empirical data and model invariance.
 - 5) The statistics used in the research were the descriptive statistics program, consisting of the frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, skew, and stature of observable variables. which is to describe the basic characteristics of the group and check the distribution of the variables using the software package. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to obtain a correlation matrix between observable variables using a ready-made computer program. While model testing relates to empirical data, research hypothesis testing, and model invariance, using AMOS software.

RESULTS

Research on the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the eastern region. The researcher can classify the research results as follows:

- 1) The results of general data analysis revealed that the proportion of female university students in the eastern region had more females than males, most of them aged between 18-22 years (94.25 percent), studying at the second-year level (40.25), studying at the Faculty of Management Science (25.25 percent), studying in a state university in Chonburi Province (54.00 percent), parents of students working as employees of private companies (44.75%), the average monthly income of the family. Approximate students 20,001–30,000 baht (53.00 percent), parents of students have a bachelor's degree (79.00 percent), and their family is domiciled in the eastern region (60.25 percent).
- 2) The basic statistical analysis results of the observed variables were the Arithmetic Mean (M), the Standard Deviation (SD), the Distribution Coefficient (CV), the Skewness (SK), and the Peak (SK) of all observed variables in the relationship model between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the Eastern region are shown in Table 1.

Observable Variable	Number of Questions	M	SD	CV (%)	SK	SK
Advertising (ADV)	3	3.98	0.49	12.31	-0.32	0.07
Public Relations (PUB)	3	3.89	0.67	17.22	-0.34	-0.49
Promotional Promotion (SAL)	3	4.08	0.54	13.24	-0.11	-0.45

Event (EVE)	3	4.00	0.57	14.25	-0.37	0.59
Using a Salesperson (PER)	4	3.99	0.49	12.28	-0.47	0.86
Direct Marketing (DIR)	4	4.09	0.49	11.98	-0.11	0.13
Recognition of Needs (REC)	5	3.85	0.68	17.66	-0.39	-0.36
Information Search (REA)	4	3.91	0.67	17.14	-0.33	-0.24
Alternative Evaluation (EST)	5	4.08	0.49	12.01	-0.12	-0.25
Decision Making (DEC)	7	3.95	0.55	13.92	-0.11	-0.44
Behavior after selection (BEH)	5	4.01	0.52	12.97	-0.06	-0.35

From Table 1, the distribution of 11 variables has skewness and kurtosis approaching zero (0). The skewness of the observed variables ranged from -.47 to -.06, and the skewness of the variables ranged from -.49 to .86, which was within the acceptable range. This shows that the data has a normal distribution. In which West, Finch, and Curran (1955 cite Chadcham & Kornpetpanee, 2003) made recommendations regarding the determination of skewness and kurtosis of variables that skewness was not greater than 2.00 and that skewness was not greater than 2.00. With a peak of not more than 7.00, it can be admitted that the data has a normal curve distribution.

Therefore, the researcher continued to analyze the research data without changing the data values.

The results of the linear relationship analysis between the 11 observed variables of the model of the relationship between the integrated marketing communication model and the decision to study at a public university of the students in the eastern region, are shown in the table.

Variable	ADV	PUB	SAL	EVE	PER	DIR	REC	SEA	EST	DEC	BEH
ADV	1.00										
PUB	0.32**	1.00									
SAL	0.31**	0.59**	1.00								
EVE	0.24**	0.46**	0.50**	1.00							
PER	0.28**	0.45**	0.54**	0.46**	1.00						
DIR	0.25**	0.41**	0.46**	0.36**	0.49**	1.00					
REC	.20**	.52**	.34**	.31**	.35**	.26**	1.00				
SEA	.46**	.84**	.64**	.50**	.51**	.44**	.48**	1.00			
EST	.34**	.56**	.89**	.74**	.57**	.49**	.31**	.63**	1.00		
DEC	.33**	.67**	.64**	.60**	.82**	.57**	.49**	.71**	.69**	1.00	
BEH	.30**	.59**	.56**	.48**	.57**	.91**	.43**	.60**	.58**	.75**	1.00

Note: **p < .01

From Table 2, a statistically significant correlation coefficient between the observed variables was found to have a positive correlation coefficient, ranging from 0.20 to 0.89. The most correlated variables were the Alternative Evaluation (EST) and the Data Search (SAL), with a correlation coefficient of 0.89. The least correlated variable was perceived demand (REC) and advertising (ADV), which had a correlation coefficient of 0.20. It was shown that the observed variables in the model were suitable for further model analysis because the variables in the model were statistically correlated at the .01 level.

The results of the analysis of the relationship model between the integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university of the students in the Eastern region according to the assumptions are shown in Figure 1 and Table 3.

$$\chi^2=9.75, df=12, P\text{-Value}=.64, CFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, RMR=.03, RMSEA=.00$$

Remark: **p < .01

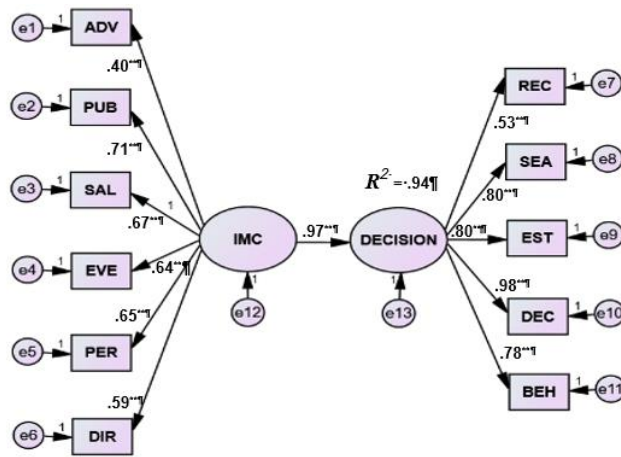


FIGURE 1
THE RESULTS OF THE MODEL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND THE DECISION TO STUDY IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY AMONG STUDENTS IN THE EASTERN REGION.

Research Hypothesis	Analysis results	Conclusion
Item 1	Integrated marketing communication had a positive direct influence on students' decision to study at public universities in the Eastern Region, with a statistical significance of 0.97 at the 0.01 level.	According to the hypothesis
Item 2s	The correlation model between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study at public universities in the Eastern region was developed in accordance with the empirical data with value $\chi^2=9.75$, $df=12$, $P\text{-Value}=.64$, $CFI=1.00$, $TLI=1.00$, $RMR=.03$, $RMSEA=.00$	According to the hypothesis

From Figure 1 and Table 3 it is found that the model is consistent with the empirical data, the researcher, therefore, proposed the developed model as the research findings, from which the research results show that;

A model of the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the Eastern region that was developed consisted of; Integrated Marketing Communications is a statistically significant positive direct-cause in the student's decision to choose to study in Eastern Region, Advertising, public relations, promotion, event organizing, sales staff, and direct marketing were among the observed variables that were positive direct-cause of the decision to study at public universities in the region with statistically significant.

When considering the correlation coefficient between the model variables, the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the student's decision to study at a public university in the eastern region. It turned out that the correlation coefficients between the observed variables were all positive, with the highest value of the correlation coefficient between the alternative and promotion evaluation variables being 0.89, showing that the evaluation of alternatives was positively correlated with a high level of promotion. The lowest observed correlation coefficient was 0.20, indicating that perception of demand was positively correlated with advertising.

The results of the model analysis of the relationship between integrative marketing communication and the decision to choose to study in the Eastern State University by using advertising, public relations, promotion, event organization, use of salespeople, and direct marketing. It turned out that the model was consistent with the empirical data based on the

statistical terms used to check the model's conformity: $\chi^2=9.75$, $df=12$, $P\text{-Value}=.64$, $CFI=1.00$, $TLI=1.00$, $RMR=.03$, $RMSEA=.00$. A statistically significant influence curve at 0.01 level. Therefore, the model shown in Figure 1 is the most suitable model to describe the relationship between integrative marketing communication and public university decision-making by students in the Eastern Region using advertising, business, public relations, promotion, event organization, use of sales staff, and direct marketing.

CONCLUSION

Research on the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the eastern region. The researcher can summarize the research results according to the following objectives:

- 1) A model of the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the eastern region. It turned out that the model was consistent with the empirical data, i.e., integrative marketing communication had a direct influence through decision variables with an influence size of 0.97, with a statistical significance at the 0.01 level. The indicators of integrated marketing communication consisted of 6 variables, in descending order of influence size: public relations, promotion, use of salespeople, event management, direct marketing, and advertising, respectively.
- 2) The results of the coherence examination of the correlation model between integrated marketing communication and the student's decision to study at a public university in the eastern region were chi-squared (χ^2)=9.75, $df=12$, $p\text{-value}=.64$, $TLI=1.00$, $CFI=1.00$, $RMR=.03$, $RMSEA=0.00$, and $\chi^2/df=.81$. It was shown that the relationship between the integrated marketing communication model and the decision to study at a public university among students in the Eastern region was in good harmony with the empirical data.

DISCUSSION

Research on the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a state university of students in the eastern region, the researcher can discuss the research results as follows.

- 1) The results of the analysis of the relationship model between the integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in the public university of the students in the Eastern region developed from the concepts, theories, and related research. It turns out that the model developed is based on the ideas of (Kotler & Keller, 2012), and the results showed that students pursuing tertiary education at public universities in the eastern region decided to study at a public university based on integrated marketing communications. Because nowadays students can find information about the course. The cost of education or even the credibility of the faculty members gives students a wealth of information from each higher education institution to compare and make an informed choice for further study. But when higher education institutions have poor, unreliable, unreliable information for students appearing on online media, or other offline sources. Those higher education institutions will not be trusted by students. Higher education institutions, therefore, need to integrate with the field of marketing communication. Such as advertising media, public relations, scholarships, mentors, and direct commercial marketing are increasing. As integrative marketing communications is an important educational context today, this is consistent with research by Yeboah and Atakora (2013) on how customer satisfaction influences marketing. Using Ghana Baptist University College as a case study to lead the trend of communication restructuring. This trend has led the organization to restructure its communications by bringing together various communication tools such as advertising, promotion, public relations, and many more. Data were collected using questionnaires that asked about satisfaction during the study and while teaching, satisfaction with university facilities, satisfaction with university services, and student satisfaction with communication activities. Whether or not the marketing of the university depends on the satisfaction of other things. The results showed that the satisfaction offered by the university made the participants impressed with the university's marketing communications, leaving customers satisfied with a service or product that could be said to others as good, and is a marketing one.
- 2) The results examined the consistency of the relationship model between integrated marketing communication and the student's decision to study in a public university in the Eastern Region. It turned out that the model of the relationship between integrated marketing communication and the decision to

choose to study in a public university of the students in the Eastern region that developed was consistent with the empirical data and was within acceptable criteria according to the concept of (Hooper et al., 2008; Makmee, 2016; Suksawang, 2020) said that integrative marketing communications had a direct influence through decision-making variables. The level of integrative marketing communication that students studying in tertiary education in public universities in the eastern region focused the most on public relations, followed by sales promotion, sales staff variables, Event variables, direct marketing variables, and advertising variables, respectively. Because of the social environment and educational situation in today's era that is highly competitive at the level of higher education institutions. Coupled with the state of technology that fills and narrows the gap in the disparity in the budget for the marketing of each higher education institution. In addition to students in Thailand, it also includes the diversity of foreign students who come to study at the higher education level in Thailand, thus increasing the role of communication in the country and the country of origin of students, whether in the matter of Communicate through Internet advertising. Public relations through students through word-of-mouth scholarship or a guidance counselor, the information transmitted by the educational institution will serve as a medium that helps to tell the story of the higher education institution and build emotional bonds with the stakeholders both outside and within the higher education institution. Research shows that integrative marketing communication is a potential and important factor for educational institutions. This is in line with the concept of (Duncan, 2002; Durkin & Lawlor, 2001 & Kitchen, 2005), who say that integrated marketing communications are the use of all forms of communication and communication channels, whether brand names or brands. the company, the channel to send a communication message that aims to create a change in buying behavior, and to persuade the target group as well as the stakeholder groups of all units involved to have a positive effect on the image, and corporate reputation. In which academics and marketing communications practitioners believe that the increase in the number of various communication channels and diversification to market segments to effectively meet the needs. It can simplify consumer databases and affect the branding of tertiary institutions. This is why universities will need to focus on increasing the complexity of marketing by creating integrated marketing communications. This is to meet the needs of consumers exactly at that point.

RECOMMENDATION

Applying Recommendation

- i. Should pay attention to the budget used in marketing communication of higher education institutions in the development. To be used as a tool to upgrade the integrated marketing communication strategy, the administrators should support the preparation of the subsidy spending plan following the integrated marketing communication plan of the higher education institutions.
- ii. Higher education institutions can use the information for marketing planning, adjusting various strategies, and most importantly, to support the needs of students effectively and is an important goal in raising the level of the higher education business further.

Further Research Recommendation

There should be a study of the relationship model between integrated marketing communication and the decision to study in a public university among students in the eastern region by using a Multiple Group Analysis such as public university students and private university students or with multilevel analysis.

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