

Promoting Malaysian Government Universities: Potential Students' Views

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Abstract

This study sets out to determine the choice of Malaysian Universities by Form Five and Form Six students in Malaysia. Further to that, respondents were asked of their choice of branding statements and promotion tools for Universities. The top three Universities chosen as first choice were UM, USM and UKM. The top three branding statements overall were excellent teaching staff, excellent resource and safety. The top three promotion tools were teachers, newspapers and parents. Recommendations were made to Universities.

Keywords: Branding, Positioning, Promotion, Malaysia, University

Introduction

Entering into a university would be the aim for majority of the students who have completed their higher secondary education. In Malaysia, in order for students to enter government universities, they need to enter and pass form six. Numbers of students in Form six in 2004 was 87,994 students and in 2005, there were 159,641 students registered in lower six. This is because by passing form six, it is one of the best opportunities in order to enter universities, besides other program like matriculation and diploma in public or private higher institutions (New Straits Time, 2007).

Students will want to enter university with good brand name (Belanger, Mount and Wilson, 2002). Students choose universities based on brand of name of university (Jevons, 2006) and usually universities with good brand name will have higher ranking (Bunzel, 2007) and are seen as more prestigious by students (Belanger, Mount and Wilson, 2002). A good brand name of university for example University of Oxford in United States and University Malaya in Malaysia produce a positive impact of brand name towards students (Gutman and Miaoulis, 2003). Besides that

students also choose university base on image and reputation regardless of their teaching quality (Huber, 1992).

Today there are a lot of tools available to students in order to obtain information about universities that they are interested before making final decision in which university to enroll (Bunzel, 2007). Examples of the tools are web sites which become the first place students and parents look for information (Gutman and Miaoulis, 2003), newspapers, alumni, and teachers (Bunzel, 2007). There are few studies on students' perception towards branding of Malaysian universities. Most of the studies regarding students' choice are based on Western countries universities (Vaughn et al., 1978; Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1980; Veloutsou, 2005). Thus, this research will focus on perception of form six students in term of the criteria (brand positioning statements) that these students perceive are important in choosing universities and also the promotion tools that they use in obtaining information about universities.

Brief Literature Review

There were five reports written for the education system in Malaysia before and after independence, which are: Fenn-Wu Statement (1951), Education Ordinance (1952), Razak Statement (1956), Barnes Statement (1960), and Rahman Talib Statement (1960). However, the education system in Malaysia now is based on the Razak Report (1956) (Yahaya, 2003). Malaysia's education system is divided into three levels that are primary, secondary and post-secondary levels (Ching, 2006)

There are five objectives of primary school education that is to master Bahasa Melayu, to master arithmetic skills and use them in daily lives, to master English as the second language, to master scientific and technical skills, to understand and appreciate culture and participate in recreational activity and to develop talent and creativity (Ching, 2006). The primary level of education consists of two types of schools, the national schools and the national-type schools. The national schools use the Malay language as medium of instruction and English is the compulsory subject. Other languages such as Mandarin and Tamil can still be taught to students. Whereas, for the national-type schools, the medium of instruction is either Mandarin or Tamil. However, for the purpose of unity among various ethnic groups in Malaysia, students in national-type school are required to study Malay language and English as compulsory subjects, a suggestion from the Razak Report (1956).

There are three types of schools in the secondary level, academic schools, national religious schools and technical schools (Ching, 2006). In the academic schools, general subjects in art and science streams are offered to the students, plus the vocational and technical subjects which are also included in the curriculum. The national religious schools offer compulsory subjects related to Islamic teachings and also offer general academic subjects to the students same like academic schools. Lastly, the technical schools offer vocational and technical subjects in addition to subjects on general education.

In term of the examination, students in the academic schools and national religious schools are evaluated in the national exam that is Malaysia Certificate of Education (SPM) whereas the technical schools students are required to sit for Malaysia