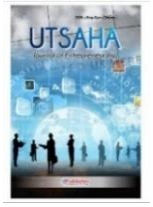

ISSN 2809-8501 (Online)
UTSAHA: Journal of Entrepreneurship
https://journal.jfpublisher.com/index.php/joe
Vol. 4, Issue 4, October 2025
doi.org/10.56943/joe.v4i4.901

Marketing Mix and Student Enrollment in the Faculty of Economics and Management in a Public University

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ABSTRACT

In a market with intense competition, student preferences may change often in higher education. Understanding what prospective students need is crucial, especially for public universities. The marketing mix has become a crucial component in helping higher education institutions succeed. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between seven elements of marketing mix and student enrolment in the faculty of economics and management of a public university in Cambodia. Three hundred and sixty students in the Faculty of Economics and Management at Royal University of Law and Economics, which is a prestigious public administrative university in Phnom Penh, were selected to be a sample for the study. The data was collected through administered survey from July 1st to August 15th, 2024. By applying the multiple regression analysis equipped with SPSS 22, the results found that product, place and process positively and significantly influenced on student enrolment, while other four elements including promotion, people and physical evidence had a positive and insignificant effect and, furthermore, price had a negative but insignificant impact on the faculty selection of students. Adoption of the marketing mix is thought to greatly increase student enrollment. In order to enlarge student decision in enrollment in the faculty, the study suggested that the university be encouraged to employ proper price, promotion, people and physical evidence.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Marketing Mix, Public University, Student Decision Making*

INTRODUCTION

Every country needs a higher level of education. Acknowledging the importance of tertiary education, nations concentrate on raising the standard of their higher education. Students looking to pursue higher education find it difficult to compete with or be drawn to countries whose universities are poorly ranked because of subpar educational standards (Fomba et al., 2023). Consequently, it is the duty of universities and their administration to consistently support reforms aimed at raising the provided standard of education. On the other hand, public colleges are typically charged with ignoring these issues and allowing them to destroy their institutions or the nation's educational system as a whole (Bunry & Walker, 2022).

Even with the advancements, MoEYS thinks there is still room for improvement in the tertiary education industry. There was just one HEI in the Cambodian higher education system in 1979, and up until 1997, all HEIs were public. Over the past 25 years, Cambodia has made great strides toward increasing access to postsecondary education. After laws were changed to permit the creation of private colleges, branch campuses and offshore campuses affiliated with both private and public universities have grown quickly. By 2022, there were 132 HEIs of which 48 are public universities with the number of enrollment students of 62,991 (35.8%) of the total enrollment of 175,962 (MoEYS, 2023). As seen from this figure, the number of students enrolled in the public universities were still low to the private. Universities in Cambodia have faced difficulties. For instance, a research by Chheng (2024) recommended that tertiary institutions in Cambodia improve the quality of management practices through staff capacity building, facilities, and engagement with academic and related stakeholders.

Besides, across a sample of three private institutions in Cambodia, the location and physical evidence had no discernible effect on student enrollment (Phan et al., 2025). The majority of Cambodian educational institutions find themselves in a situation where they strive to accept the greatest number of new students. At the same time, there is growing of universities that students can select, which intensifies rivalry amongst higher education establishments (Fitri et al., 2025). Universities in Cambodia are also being forced by the competitiveness in the education sector to modify the dimensions of their service quality and implement a marketing plan in order to set themselves apart from the competition. Rapid growth in the number of higher education institutions, professors, and students has resulted in a number of simultaneous problems that have long plagued tertiary education in Cambodia (Sol, 2021).

Intense competition is a major problem faced by universities. There are various factors that might effect on the choice of potential students in choosing to study at a college, including the study program they are interested in that has been accredited excellent or low tuition fees, and available scholarships. Currently, new prospective students are increasingly critical in making decisions to choose a

tertiary institution. For these reasons, an attractive and competitive marketing strategy must be applied by universities, especially for the public, in order to win the competition. As tough competition and importance of marketing faced by higher universities and, furthermore, it is very few of preceding studies which applied elements of marketing mix as influencing factors of student decision to choose a major of Economics or Management, especially in state higher institutions in Cambodia, this study was done to examine the effect of marketing mix elements on the selection of the faculty of economics and management in a public university in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Mix in the Higher Education

The marketing mix of educational services is a component of educational organizations that may be managed by organizations in their interactions with students and will be utilized to meet student needs (Khatab et al., 2019). When the term "marketing mix" first appeared, it was used to describe a grouping of numerous essential marketing system components, including as products, prices, distribution, and promotional activities, all of which were meant to reach and please consumers (Irmana, 2023; Sudari et al., 2019). The components of the conventional marketing mix have changed from four to seven elements when applied to service firms in line with advancements in the business sector. These components are product, price, distribution/location, promotion, process, people, and physical evidence (Othman et al., 2019). The following is a description of the seven components of the marketing mix for educational services:

1. Product

   Products are goods or services that companies provide to target markets, including design, features, quality, and brand. It is crucial to meet or exceed consumer expectations (Kotler, 2019). Khatab et al. (2019) claimed that excellent reputation and educational quality are among the products and services provided to students in tertiary education. A study by Meri et al. (2023) indicated that product has significant influence to student decision in choosing the management program in Nigerian college. In line with (Febriansah, 2024) showed that product positively and significantly impacts a student decision to choose Indonesian University.

2. Price

   Price is the money consumers pay for a product or service, determined by cost, competitor prices, demand, and perceived value. Strategies include discounts, payment schemes, and psychological pricing. Syam et al. (2019) revealed that there is a positive and significant effect of price on the student decision to select the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Dharmawangsa, Indonesia. Similarly, Meri et al. (2023) found

that the product effects on student enrollment in choosing private tertiary education in Cambodia.

3. Place

   Place is where the product or service is available to consumers, including distribution, retail, and logistics, to ensure optimal accessibility. With the availability of a university website, one can practically visit a university by using the internet. However, Khatab et al. (2019) claimed that the college location will affect potential consumer preferences when they make decisions, which is consistent with existing empirical study by the result highlighted by Jeppri et al. (2023) indicated that the place shapes university selection decisions for the private university in Tangerang, Indonesia.

4. Promotion

   Promotion that has been implemented from one year to the next is a factor in the improvement of student decisions. In accordance with Kusumawati et al. (2021), promotional efforts included outlining the advantages of products and persuading customers to buy goods or services. Rengthian et al. (2021) asserted that promotion has the potential to boost a company's sales. Promotion served as a helpful tactic for educating consumers about the advantages of a product. Comparably, Retnaning Tyas (2023) revealed that promotion can be a factor forming selection from private universities in Malang City, Indonesia.

5. People

   People are all those involved in providing a service or product, including employees, management, and customer service staff. Human resources in the services sector include administrators, lecturers, and staff members who are actively engaged in providing education. In service marketing like educational institutions, teach their employees in customer service and interpersonal skills with an emphasis on client pleasure. As a result, employees have a significant impact on how customers view the quality of the services they receive (Etuk et al., 2023). Ananda et al. (2019) indicated that people have positive and significant influence to student decision in selecting the faculty of Economics and Business, Harapan University, Medan, Indonesia.

6. Process

   Khatab et al. (2019). said that a process is the culmination of all actions that are typically involved in producing and providing services to clients, including work schedules, processes, mechanisms, activities, and regular matters. The method, technique, and sequence of actions used in actual educational activities to transfer services from producers to consumers is called the process. Karamang et al. (2024) showed that the

process has a significant effect on student selection a private university in Bandung, Indonesia.

7. Physical evidence

   Physical evidence is the tangible elements that consumers see and feel, such as facilities, packaging, and websites that build confidence in the quality of a service or product. During the enrollment phase, the hardware, campus buildings and facilities, and other physical evidence all serve as indicators of the caliber of the services that will be provided. Colleges need to consider the building style and auxiliary facilities while providing educational services to students (Khatab et al., 2019). Effendi et al. (2022) found that physical evidence has a positive and significant effect on the choice to select new students at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau.

Student Decision Making

Consumer behavior is studied through the decision-making process of consumers. Marketers must possess a thorough understanding of their target audience and their decision-making process. Student decisions made during the process of choosing their future university are an example of consumer behavior. Understanding student behavior at a specific college can help students learn there, which is beneficial for the university operations. Comprehending the decision-making process of students might affect university marketing tactics, it is becoming increasingly important for university managers to understand how prospective students choose which university to study and where they obtain their information. Because of these market dynamics, it is now necessary to comprehend potential students as clients whose decision-making processes, the sources of information they rely on, and their choice behavior are all subject to change (Le et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

Referring to the existing theoretical framework as 7Ps marketing mix and previous empirical studies as Febriansah (2024), Karamang et al. (2024) and Retnaning Tyas (2023), researchers developed the conceptual framework to explain the influence of marketing mix on student enrollment in faculty of economics and management at a public university in Cambodia. Therefore, the research conceptual framework has seven independent variables including product, price, place, promotion, process, people and physical evidence, while student enrollment is the dependent variable. In accordance with the conceptual framework, seven research hypotheses were developed as following:

H_1: Product has significant impact on student enrollment.

H_2: Price has significant impact on student enrollment.

H_3: Promotion has significant impact on student enrollment.

H_4: Place has significant impact on student enrollment.

H_5: People has significant impact on student enrollment.
H_6: Process has significant impact on student enrollment.
H_7: Physical evidence has significant impact on student enrollment.

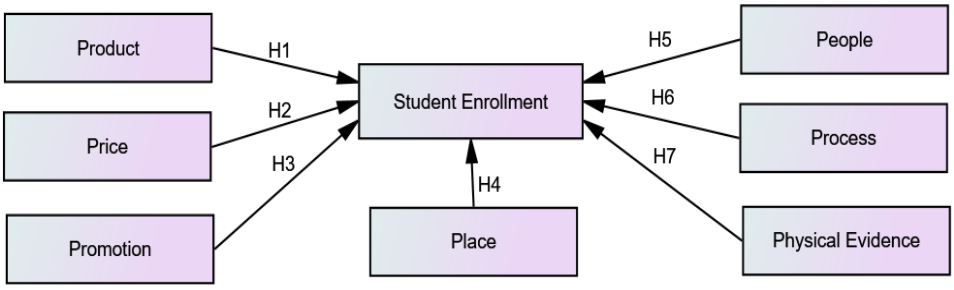

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Proposed by Researchers

Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative approach, which tries to gather numerical data and statistically analyze it (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The premise of quantitative research is that the constructs under investigation are measurable (Kotronoulas et al., 2023). Harley (2019), the goal of the quantitative approach was to produce information and understand a certain facet of the social environment by gathering and examine numerical data.

Population and Sample Size

Barnsbee et al. (2018) claimed that the targeted population was the group of people the researcher planned to study and make conclusions about. The population of this study consists of 3,480 students who are currently studying in the semester 2 of the 2023-2024 academic year in the Faculty of Economics and Management at Royal University of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Taherdoost (2017) asserted that any empirical study whose goal was to draw conclusions about the population must consider the sample size. In this study, the minimum sample size was determined by to the Slovin's formula (Aryati, 2017):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \times e^2} = \frac{3{,}480}{1 + 3{,}490 \times 0.05^2} = 359$$

For a better statistical result, the researchers determined 360 qualified respondents for the study.

Sampling and Data Collection

The researchers had used multi-stage sampling as it involved selecting a sample size by two or more stages (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The first stage was purposive sampling method was used to select the Faculty of Economics and Management in Royal University of Law and Economics, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Second, proportionate stratified method was used to select students from the four

different groups in the population of the study. Finally, the random sampling method was applied to select the classes and respondents from subgroup in sample.

Table 1. Population and sample size by year in semester 2

Year	Approximate population size	Percentage	Proportionate sample size
Year 1	1,256	36.1%	130
Year 2	907	26.1%	94
Year 3	642	18.4%	66
Year 4	675	19.4%	70
Total	3,480	100.0%	360

Source: Constructed by Researchers

Questionnaire Design

Hair et al. (2010), the questionnaire was designed with a set of questions and a scale for every item in order to get raw data. A five-point Linkert rating scale was used to measure the research constructs. There are 4 items of product derived from Hung (2020), while price and place comprise of 3 items each adapted from Meri et al. (2023). Furthermore, there are 4 items of promotion and student enrollment quoted from Meri et al. (2023), where 3 items of people, 3 items of process and 4 items of physical evidence are measured by Ananda et al. (2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reliability and Validity

As stated by Hair Jr et al. (2019), a higher alpha coefficient led to higher reliability, whereas a lower alpha coefficient reflected lower reliability or unreliability. However, a higher value of .70 indicates that the instruments have a better reliability standard. After obtaining responses from 360 respondents, the researchers applied Cronbach's alpha to analyze the data using SPSS 22 software. According to the reliability analysis, 28 items of the questionnaire items had overall coefficient value of .956. As seen in the Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from .727 to .895, which demonstrated the high degree of internal consistency of the scales used to measure the research constructs.

Table 2. The reliability of the constructs

Constructs	**Number of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**Strength of Association**
Product	4	.785	Acceptable
Price	3	.895	Good
Promotion	4	.781	Acceptable
Place	3	.830	Good
People	3	.727	Acceptable
Process	3	.779	Acceptable
Physical Evidence	4	.811	Good

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Strength of Association
Student Enrollment	4	.830	Good

Source: Processed Data by Researchers

While reliability ensures consistent scores from the scale, the validity ensures it measures the intended concept. The validity test was detected by examining the output table for the Pearson correlation coefficients between each item and the total scores. The result showed that all p values were less than .05, then the tests were significant and, therefore, the research items were considered valid.

The Outlier Detection

The purpose of the outlier test is to determine if any particular data points substantially differ from the general trend of the other observations. The Mahalanobis Distances was performed to check the multivariate outlier detection. By applying SPSS 22, the result found that there were seven outliers due to their probability values were less than .001 (Aggarwal & Sathe, 2017). Hence, the seven cases 154, 154, 284, 341, 343, 357 and 358 were removed from the data set.

Normality Test

The normality test seeks to determine if the residuals of the model are normally distributed. From the result of data processing in Table 3 below, it can be seen that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value was .200 more than .05, it can be concluded that the residuals were normally distributed.

Table 3. Normality Test with Kolmogorov-Smirnov

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
Unstandardized Residual	.046	360	.200*

Source: Processed Data by SPSS 22

Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test focuses to investigate if the residuals' variance in a regression model remains constant for every observation. Since the p value of Breusch-Pagan test was .147, greater than .05, this indicated that there is homoscedasticity in the model so that the regression model is feasibly used as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Result of Heteroscedasticity Test

Model		Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.304	7	.043	1.557	.147[b]
	Residual	9.636	345	.028		
	Total	9.941	352			

a. Dependent Variable: Res_square

b. Predictors: (Constant), Physical Evidence, Price, Promotion, People, Product, Place, Process

Source: Processed Data by SPSS 22

Multicollinearity Test

In a regression model, the multicollinearity test seeks to ascertain if the independent variables have a high correlation with one another. Testing for multicollinearity involves examining the VIF and tolerance value. As seen from Table 5, it can be seen that the tolerance numbers of all independent variables > 0.1 and VIF < 10 (Miles, 2014). These indicated that there is an absence of multicollinearity between the independent variables in the model in this study.

Table 5. Result of Multicollinearity Test

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Product	.468	2.138
	Price	.663	1.507
	Promotion	.541	1.850
	Place	.378	2.643
	People	.390	2.567
	Process	.345	2.901
	Physical Evidence	.372	2.690

Source: Processed Data by SPSS 22

Demographics of Respondents

In this study, 353 respondents had completed all the required items, and consisted of 126 (35.7%) year 1 including men 70 (19.8%) and 56 (15.9%) women, 93 (26.3%) year 2 including men 14 (4.0%) and 79 (22.4%) women, 64 (18.1%) year 3 including men 29 (8.2%) and 35 (9.9%) women, and 70 (19.8%) year 4 including men 36 (10.2%) and 34 (9.6%) women. Moreover, there were 111 (31.4%) were majoring in Finance and Banking; consist of 25 (7.1%) were in the morning session, 22 (6.2%) were in afternoon session and 64 (18.1%) were in evening session,104 (29.5%) were majoring in Accounting; consist of 51 (14.4%) were in afternoon session and 53 (15.0%) were in evening session, 66 (18.7%) were

majoring in Development Economics, 45 (12.7%) were majoring in Business Management and 27 (7.6%) were majoring in Tourism and Hospitality Management were in the morning session.

Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination was obtained by SPSS 22. It indicated the percentage of the contribution of the influence of the predictor variables with the response variable. Based on Table 6, it can be seen that the Adjusted R^2 obtained a value of .612. This means that all variations of changes in the student enrollment can be explained by product, place, price, promotion, process, people and physical evidence of 61.2%, while the remaining of 38.8% is explained by other variables outside the model.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.787[a]	.620	.612	.332

a. Predictors: (Constant), Physical Evidence, Process, Price, People, Placement, Promotion, Product

b. Dependent Variable: Students Enrollment

Source: Processed Data by SPSS 22

Research Hypothesis Testing

The results of regression analysis shown in Table 7 explain the factors affecting student enrollment in the Faculty of Economics and Management as following:

For hypothesis 1 (H_1), since the standardized path coefficient between product and student enrollment was .185, t-value = 3.806 > 1.98, p-value = .000 < .05, then there is a significant relationship between product and student enrollment, and therefore, H_1 was supported. For hypothesis 2 (H_2), since the standardized path coefficient between price and student enrollment was -.002, t-value = -.052 > -1.98, p-value =.959 > .05, then there is an insignificant relationship between price and student enrollment, so H_2 was not supported. For hypothesis 3 (H_3), since the standardized path coefficient between promotion and student enrollment was .077, t-value = 1.701 < 1.98, p-value = .090 > .05, then there is an insignificant relationship between promotion and student enrollment, therefore, H_3 was not supported. For hypothesis 4 (H_4), since the standardized path coefficient between placement and student enrollment was .275, t-value = 5.097 > 1.98, p-value = .000 < .05, then there is a significant relationship between place and student enrollment. Hence, H_4 was supported.

For hypothesis 5 (H_5), since the standardized path coefficient between people and student enrollment was .065, t-value = 1.227 < 1.98, p-value = .221 > .05, then

there is an insignificant relationship between people and student enrollment. Consequently, H_5 was not supported. For hypothesis 6 (H_6), since the standardized path coefficient between process and student enrollment was .262, t-value = 4.640 > 1.98, p-value =.000 < .05, then there is a significant relationship between process and student enrollment, so H_6 was supported. For hypothesis 7 (H_7), since the standardized path coefficient between physical evidence and student enrollment was .076, t-value = 1.388 < 1.98, p-value =.166 > .05, then there is an insignificant relationship between physical evidence and student enrollment, so H_7 was not supported.

Table 7. Result of Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.575	.150		3.82	.000
	Product	.191	.050	.185	3.80	.000
	Price	-.002	.033	-.002	-.052	.959
	Promotion	.074	.043	.077	1.70	.090
	Place	.231	.045	.275	5.09	.000
	People	.057	.046	.065	1.22	.221
	Process	.239	.052	.262	4.64	.000
	Physical Evidence	.071	.051	.076	1.38	.166

Source: Processed Data by SPSS 22

In summary, the findings may provide a useful basis for further academic and empirical researches on the impact of marketing mix on student decision to major in the Faculty of Economics and Management in Cambodian public universities. The findings showed that there are positive and significant correlation between the three determinants of marketing mix such as product, place and process on student enrollment. Nevertheless, there are positive but insignificant impact between promotion and people on student selection. Similarly, physical evidence has an insignificant impact on student enrollment. Plus, price has a negative and insignificant effect on student choice in the major selection.

The study findings suggest that the Faculty of Economics and Management is an excellent option for students. This demonstrates that the study program's product quality is highly appealing and capable of attracting more students. The finding is in line with the previous studies conducted by Onsardi et al. (2021) and Meri et al. (2023). Besides, there is a connection between place and student enrollment. This indicates that the university location strategically located in the heart of the city influences students' choices. This result is consistent with existing studies by Ananda et al. (2019) and Jeppri et al. (2023). Similarly, the process and the student choice of faculty are related. This implies that students will give it more

thought if the procedure is improved. This finding is supported by foregoing researches by Hung (2020) and Karamang et al. (2024).

However, the findings of this study show that people have little influence on prospective student decision-making determination, which is contradict to previous results by Hung (2020) and Febriansah (2024). These findings suggest that although humans have some influence, it is not very significant. Additionally, students prefer to take other factors into account while making decisions since they believe that faculty members are inadequate and do not match. Likewise, promotion and physical evidence proof provided by the faculty have some, but not much, of an impact on students decision, wich are comparble with a study by Syam et al. (2019). Prospective students are more inclined to pursue higher education if the promotion and physical evidence are better or more comprehensive. Student decision to choose a major is negatively impacted by the price given, however this effect is not very strong, as in accordance with the studies Effendi et al., 2022 and Febriansah (2024). Prospective students are less likely to continue their studies at the faculty if the fee is higher.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that product, consisting of accreditation program, the previous academic performance, major availability, and the available major that has more employment opportunities in the future, significantly influences on student enrollment. Besides, the place like easily accessible, the location is on the main road and spacious and secure parking area significantly affects student decision. Similarly, there is a significant relationship between student enrollment and process, including the incomplicated registration procedure, the applied teaching method which balnce between theories and practices. However, there is insignificant and posive connection between student decision and people, comprising the educative staff, administrative staff and a management team, making it easier in matters related to study. Plus, promotion and physical evidence as infrastructure, ambience, library facilities and room positively but insignificantly impact on student decision. Lastly, price such as tuition fee, payment methods and registration fee, has a negative and insignificant effect on student choice in majoring in the faculty of economics and management.

The empirical findings of the study contribute to the theoretical framework of student enrollment in the faculty of economics and management. In practice, this research can assist the faculty managements in developing strategies to attract potential students through increased quality of promotion, physical evidence, people, and as well as affordable price. This research also gives information to the government about student decion in majoring the faculty of economics and management in Cambodian public universities, which may be utilized to design the human capital training program in order to improve staff performance.

This research faced a few limitations that should be extended in future research. The sample was limited to the students in the Faculty of Economics and Management in Royal University of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Further research should enlarge sample size to other public universities and, in addition, explore the effect of demographic factors like gender, age and employment on student's major selection. Besides multiple regression, the structural equation modelling (SEM) with moderating or mediation effect should be considered. Lastly, it should be followed by qualitative surveys such as interviews or focus groups to get more reliable data and analysis.

SUGGESTION

The results of this study might provide inputs for managements of the faculty of economics and management of the university. The several strategies are recommended to enhance the choice to select the faculty. Firstly, the price strategy as the tuition fee of the faculty should be constantly kept due to the cutthroat competition and the economic hardship for Cambodian. Secondly, managements should disseminate better informative information about the faculty to students, especially grade 12 students and their parents. Thirdly, the capacity building for administrative, education staff and managements as well should be taken into consideration to create a positive word-of-mouth for active students, thereby influencing perception of prospective students for their choice. Last but not least, the physical evidence should be renovated because these are one of the important selling points that directly gets value from potential students.

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