

EFFORTS TO REALIZE STUDENTS' DECISIONS IN CHOOSING TO STUDY AT PTS IN ORDER TO INCREASE STUDENTS' SATISFACTION

(Studies at PTS in Semarang City).

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find the factors that influence the students' decisions in choosing to attend lectures at Private Higher Education (PTS). These factors are the managements' efforts of PTS to increase customer satisfaction, in this case students' satisfaction. This is an exploratory study, because the respondent was free to answer questions according to their experience. The respondents were taken from 11 private universities in Semarang City set by purposive random sampling technique. The data is processed by using descriptive approach. The results of the research indicated that there were 13 factors that affected students to choose to study at PTS. Those factors were: brand image of PTS (18.5%), not accepted at PTN, Police/Military Academy (17%), the place is close to home and strategic (16%), family and friends (15%), a low cost/affordable (8%), managed by religious foundation (7%), compliance with students' interest (6%), eager to increase knowledge (4%), accreditation status (2%), there are afternoon/week-end classes (2%), desire to be an entrepreneur (2%), managed by the foundation of UNDIP alumni (1.5%), and full facilities and good environment (1%). When these factors were coupled with the concept of the marketing mix of products and services, there are only four relevant factors: places, people, price, and facilities/physical appearance. Based on these data, in order to increase students' satisfaction the managements of PTS should improve the brand image, the relationships with students' family, and maintain the affordable tuition fee.

Keywords: marketing mix, brand image, customer satisfaction, Private Higher Education (PTS)

Introduction

Students' satisfaction is a mental condition that occurs because students find something expected from their academic community. The students' satisfaction as a customer (customer satisfaction) should be pursued by the management of Higher Education; including the Private Higher Education (PTS). The effort of PTS is among others by understanding the reasons why students choose to study in the PTS concerned. Therefore, research is a way to understand the reasons for the decision to choose to study in PTS. The main question to be answered is "What are the factors that influence the students' decision to choose to study in PTS?"

There have been many similar studies related to the reasons why students decide to choose to study in PTS. However, conclusions from the research results vary; though the same variables are used. For example, Indrayani and Waspada (2011)

(downloaded on 10 April 2015) concluded that the independent variables namely product, price, promotion, location, people, processes and services applied simultaneously influence the student's decision significantly in choosing a college at the location of their research. However, according to research done by Arsyad (2010), Sefnedi (2013), Indayati (2014) and Prabowo (2015) not all independent variables show positive and significant impact on students' decision to choose to study in a place of their destination.

The researchers used the dependent and independent variables with respect to the concept of the marketing mix in the field of services. The independent variables consist of product, price, promotion, place, process, people, and physical evidence, while the dependent variable is the student's decision to choose to study in a certain PTS or Study Program. The answers provided by the researchers use Likert Scale, namely by using the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, grading choices from *disagree* to *strongly agree*. The Scale has been provided by answers so that each respondent simply selects by crossing one of the figures.

Now that the result of the research is still diverse as the questionnaires are closed, it is necessary to conduct further study using open questionnaires. Based on these reasons, the researchers feel the need of doing research entitled EFFORTS TO REALIZE STUDENTS' DECISIONS IN CHOOSING TO STUDY AT PTS IN ORDER TO INCREASE STUDENTS' SATISFACTION (Studies at PTS in Semarang City).

The problems to be discussed through this research were the factors that influence the students' decisions to choose to study at PTS in Semarang City and the PTS's formula of strategies to achieve students' satisfaction. Based on these problems, the objectives of this study were: firstly, to identify and analyze the indicators that affect the students to decide to study at the PTS; secondly, to analyze the indicators that affect the students to decide to study at PTS based on the concept of the marketing mix for the field of education services; and thirdly, to apply the PTS's formula of strategies to improve students' satisfaction as customers of the PTS based on the expectations of students reflected on the factors that influence students to decide to study at the PTS.

Based on the three objectives mentioned above, the results of this study are expected to be significant and useful to: firstly, the management/chairperson of the PTS in formulating the strategies to increase students' satisfaction; secondly, the members of the academic institution, served as feedback material for developing the theory of marketing science, and thirdly, subsequent researchers, served as a reference related to marketing theory; especially with regard to the marketing mix for the field of educational services. Fourthly, science development, served as a reference in marketing materials, in particular for marketing mix for the field of higher educational services.

Finding and Discussion

The object of this research is the students of private universities in the city of Semarang. As the object of the research, being judged from its mission of existence, PTS is classified into two, namely the PTS that has a religious mission and PTS whose mission is national. Judging from the level, the number of PTS to be studied is eleven which consists of nine Universities, one STIE and one Teachers' Training College. The population in this study is all students at PTS in Semarang. The number of samples in this study is 1,000 students taken randomly from the eleven PTS selected. The samples are determined by using purposive random sampling technique.

Factors Affecting Students Study at PTS in Semarang

Table 4.1 Factors Affecting Students' Decision to choose to study at PTS

No.	Factors	Percentage
1	Brand image of PTS	18,5
2	Not accepted at PTN, Police/Military Academy	17
3	The place is close to home and strategic	16
4	Family and friends	15
5	Low cost / affordable	8
6	Managed by a religious foundation	7
7	Compliance with interest	6
8	Eager to Increase Knowledge	4
9	Accreditation Status	2
10	There are afternoon and week-end classes	2
11	Desire to be an entrepreneur	2
12	Managed by the Foundation of UNDIP alumni	1,5
13	Full Facilities and Good Environment	1
Total		100

Sources: Primary data, processed 2016

The following sub-chapters are the descriptions of each factor which influences students' decisions to choose to study at PTS.

Brand Image of PTS

Each PTS has a name that can be categorized as the brand of the PTS concerned. The term of brand used here is the one based on the definition proposed by Aaker (1996) which states that the brand is a name or symbol which has discriminatory feature (such as logo, seal, and packaging) in order to identify the goods or services of a certain seller or group of sellers.

The Brand image of each PTS is expressed in terms such as: good universities, excellent universities, favorite universities, famous universities, the best universities, excellent quality, very good quality and trustworthy, excellent quality and the best graduates. There are 31 terms used by the respondents to describe the brand image of the PTS which gets the highest ranking (18.5 percent) in this research

Not accepted at PTN, Police/Military Academy

Not accepted at State Universities (PTN), Police/Military Academy is a factor that occupy the second rank (17 percent). For this group of students, choosing the PTS is the second choice after their first choice to enter PTN or Police/Military Academy has failed. When linked with the brand image of PTS, then their choice to enter PTS in Semarang is the right choice.

The place is close to home and Strategic

The factor of the place is close to home and strategic (16 percent) has six indicators, they are: the distance between the campus and the home is close, the campus is close to work, the location of the campus is in the middle of the city, the campus is close to the home of the relative, the location of the campus is strategic, and the transportation is easy.

Family and Friends

In this study, the factor of family and friends (15 percent) which belong to community factor is the community participation in empowering the private universities in Semarang. Their participation is due to the fact they are sympathetic to the PTS,

and/or the PTS gives them attention. The term *empowering* refers to their efforts to make the PTS have the ability to organize lectures.

The community factor has three indicators, namely: friends at the PTS, parents, and brother/sister as alumni of the PTS. Friends at the PTS occupy the highest rank, followed by the parents' indicator and the lowest rank is brother/sister as alumni. The role of friends is to give advice, and to provide information about the PTS.

Low cost / affordable

A price in this study is defined as a fraction of currency to be paid by the buyer to get the product. This definition differs from the definition put forward by Kotler and Keller (2009: 67) who propose "price is one of the elements of the marketing mix that produces revenue; other elements produce costs. Perhaps the price is the easiest element in a marketing program to be adapted;".

Information of tuition fee (8 percent) is an important factor for students as consideration; they will make a comparison of the different tuition fee of the PTS. Therefore, each PTS generally puts the tuition fee list align with the study program of the respective PTS.

Managed by a religious foundation

A total of 7 percent of respondents choose PTS managed by religious foundations. There are four PTS with religious foundation in Semarang, namely: Sultan Agung Islamic University (UNISSULA), University of Muhammadiyah Semarang (USM), University of Wahid Hasyim (UNWAHAS), and the Catholic University (UNIKA) Soegiyopranoto.

The other selected PTS are managed by national foundation named YPLPT (Building Foundation of Institute for Higher Education). YPLPT of each PTS has different name in accordance with the name contained in the Notary Act. For example YPLPT of UNISBANK is the Foundation of Education and Publisher for Indonesian Students (YPPMI).

Compliance with Interest

There are 6 percent of respondents whose choice of PTS is influenced by their self-interest. Self-interest is an internal factor of each respondent affecting one's personal self. This factor is very important in growing the fighting spirit of the students in participating themselves in the campus programs. With high fighting spirit, students are expected to gain maximum results. The maximum results will yield competitive qualified scholars and will be very beneficial in their working world later.

Eager to Increase Knowledge

The number of respondents who are eager to increase their knowledge at PTS is 4 percent. It indicates that the PTS should really provide facilities for students to freely search for and develop their knowledge. The lecture is the learning process that should be developed in such a way so that the students really gain the knowledge they expect.

Accreditation Status

PTS accreditation status gets low rank (2 percent), it indicates that most respondents do not take care on this factor. The accreditation status, however, is an important factor for the PTS since it shows the level of PTS.

Most students pay less attention to the accreditation status, but they focus on the brand image of the PTS. This is due to the accreditation status which is less

familiar to the general public. Those who take care on this factor are the users of the PTS graduates, especially the government and company users that only accept graduates coming from PTS with minimal accreditation status B.

There are Afternoon and Week-End Classes

The number of respondents who are affected by this factor is two percent. Those who attend the afternoon and week-end classes are students with working status. The reasons they are attending lectures are to increase knowledge and to gain higher status, namely under graduate (S1).

Desire to be an Entrepreneur

The number of respondents who want to be entrepreneurs, and choose this factor is two percent. It indicates that the PTS must present theory and entrepreneurship trainings. The program is an attempt to give satisfaction to the students. Many PTS, therefore, have stated the label of entrepreneurship.

Managed by the Foundation of UNDIP alumni

There is one PTS with National Foundation managed by Alumni of UNDIP, namely: University of Semarang (USM). The respondents who chose this factor is 1.5 percent.

Full Facilities and Good Environment

The respondents who choose this factor is only 1 percent. In the marketing mix theory, this factor is called the physical evidence. Physical evidence is the physical manifestation of PTS that can be observed by the consumers. This physical appearance can convince the consumers in choosing the PTS. Therefore, all PTS strive to develop their buildings and all facilities supporting their teaching and learning activities.

PTS's management strategy to satisfy students' needs

Based on the thirteen factors mentioned above, all PTS in Semarang must continue to improve themselves in all aspects, both the aspects of the Tri Dharma of College and the service to students. These aspects are the backbone of the existence of PTS in Semarang and in other areas. However, the aspect that needs major attention is the activity of teaching and learning process. This is very important because the teaching and learning process is directly perceived and experienced by students. Through this teaching and learning process, the PTS will produce graduates who can hopefully compete in the world of work.

Conclusions

There are thirteen factors that influence students to choose to study at PTS in Semarang. Those factors are ranked: brand image of PTS (18.5 percent), not accepted at PTN, Police/Military Academy (17 percent), the place is close to home and strategic (16 percent), family and friends (15 percent), a low cost/affordable (8 percent), managed by religious foundation (7 percent), compliance with students' interest (6 percent), eager to increase knowledge (4 percent), accreditation status (2 percent), there are afternoon/week-end classes (2 percent), desire to be an entrepreneur (2 percent), managed by the foundation of UNDIP alumni (1.5 percent), and full facilities and good environment (1 percent).

Based on the thirteen factors mentioned above, all PTS in Semarang must continue to improve themselves in all aspects. The aspect that needs major attention is the activity of teaching and learning process. This is very important because the

teaching and learning process is directly perceived and experienced by students. Through this teaching and learning process, the PTS will produce graduates who can hopefully compete in the world of work. The main concern is not to ignore other aspects of Higher Education. Another aspect to consider is to improve relationships with family, and maintaining the tuition fee.

In respect of limitation, the limitation of this study is that the respondents are not required to give detail answers to each factor. To researchers who are interested in conducting similar research in the future, it seems necessary to ask the respondents to give detail answers to the factors that need more information to make them stronger.

In regard to implications, the implications for PTS in Semarang are that the results of his study might be useful for the improvements of the policy in developing new strategies in order to give more satisfaction to students who choose to study at PTS.

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