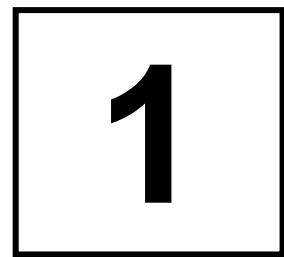## UNIVERSITY IMAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR PHRANAKHON RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

At present, higher education institutions such as universities need to concern about the organizational image management because of a changing socio–economic context. The objective of the study is to evaluate the image of Phanakhon Rajabhat University in the opinions of high school students compare with the image of private universities namely Sripatum University, Krirk Universiy, and North Bangkok University, which located nearby Phranakhon Rajbhat Univerisity. In addition, the effect of university image on students' intention to study at the university is also investigated. The research design is applied mixed method which combine quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The data is collected from 366 12th grade students in 8 high schools in Bangkhen, Donmuang, Lak Si, and Saimai district by the questionnaire based on Likert 10–point scale including the focus group with 39 students and in–depth interviews with the executives and teachers of high schools. The factor analysis is used to classify and identify 6 dimensions of university image consisting of curriculum, instructor, teaching approach, facility and environment, cultural and social activities, and output. The results reveal that the overall image of Sripatum University is ranked at the highest position following by Phranakhon Rajabhat University, North Bangkok University, and Krirk University, respectively. When considering the effects of university image on the students' intention to study at the university, it is found that the image on curriculum, cultural and social activities as well as output positively influenced the students' intention to study at Phranakhon Rajabhat University. Even though Sripatum University is the most outstanding in all dimensions of university images, most students remain having confidence in College of Teacher Education of Phranakhon Rajabhat University particularly the quality of graduates. The drawback of Phranakhon Rajabhat University comes from lacking of proactive public relation and communication as well as lacking of variety in the current curriculums. These findings will help the managements of both public and private universities develop appropriate strategies for better organizational images that promote long–term reputation, which will increase trust and confidence in the university among stakeholders and people.

Keywords: Organizational image; University image; Intention to study; Phranakhon Rajabhat University;
Private University; High school students

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INTRODUCTION

At present, higher education institutions such as universities encounter more aggressive competitiveness due to a changing socio-economic context. There are several universities that are interesting alternatives for high school students, therefore, either public or private universities need to develop their management in order to offer better education services to attract and satisfy customers, hence referring to the prospective high school students. Whatever universities do their activities, provide their services, or interact with people, it reflects to the immediate pictures and then transforms to organizational images and reputation. Even though high school students have determined several issues to select which university they prefer to further their education, the image of organization; hereafter denotes in term of university image, is one of the significant factors that attract students' attention and consideration. It influences the student's intention to select which university they will apply for, student satisfaction as well as student loyalty (R. Landrum et al., 1998; J. Fielder et al., 1993., R. James et al., 1999; H. Alves & M. Raposo, 2007). Positive image primarily initiates acceptance from publicity and subsequently develop to admiration, trust and confidence of people as a result of enhancing competitive advantage to a university. Thus, many universities increase their investment for building positive image to differentiate themselves from other universities (McPherson and Shaprio, 1998).

Phranakhon Rajabhat University (PNRU) is one of the public universities located at Bangkhen district in north area of Bangkok. There are three private universities nearby PNRU, namely Sripatum University, Krirk University, and North Bangkok University. These private universities have tried to promote their images in order to persuade high school students for enrolments by various communication channels, for example, television advertisements, billboards, and the universities' open house activities. The objective of this study, therefore, is to evaluate the image of PNRU in the opinions of high school students compare with the image of aforementioned private universities. The effect of university image on students' intention to study at PNRU is also investigated. As a result, the findings would help PNRU understand actual strengths and weaknesses in perspectives of its stakeholders and have the guidelines to develop appropriate strategies for improving PNRU images to better position.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of image and corporate image

When mentioning to organizational image or corporate image, it seems to be not concrete that most people could not describe explicit characteristics because it is something in people's mind. Many scholars have studied the concept of image and tried to measure it in various dimensions. As Ditcher (1985) noted, image refers to "the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others". According to Dowling (1986), image is specific viewpoints on a matter generated from information in one's memory, or experience relating to such matter. Likewise, (Mazusky and Jacoby 1986) defined that image was originated by a set of ongoing perceptions and/or memory forming to a set of cognition and/or effects on a phenomenon which signified to the individual. The perception in any object could be shaped by the sum of beliefs, attitudes and impressions (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990), and then an individual or a group of people constructs their ideas to an image on such object. In this sense, image can be created from many entities

such as products, brands, and organizations (Lemmink et al., 2003). Having looked into corporate image, MacInnis and Price (1 9 8 7) described that the evaluation process emanated from thought, feelings, and previous consumption experience of a business entity creates corporate image. It can be formed by various entities both objects, people, and ideas ranging from product and services, architecture to business name, tradition, ideology as well as the impression of quality (Nguen & LeBlanc, 2002). All of the aforementioned entities create immediate pictures of an organization (Gray & Balmer, 1998). These pictures in people's minds represented their perception that ones have of an organization for its actions, activities, and also its accomplishment (Riordan et al., 1 9 9 7 ; Gotsi and Wilson, 2 0 0 1). Different type of stakeholders, for example, customers, employees, and shareholders interact with the organization in different ways with different types of experience (Yusof & Musa, 2012) will have different images on the same organization (LeBlanc & Nguen, 1 9 9 6). Thus, image is the result of the interpretation of emitted message of organizations by stakeholders (Marič et. al., 2010). Messages about organization could be broaden by a variety of media or persons, for example, family, friends, or members of an organization, and then transform to the image of organizations held by those who evaluate the organization (Fombrun and Shanley, 1 9 9 0 ; Arpan et al., 2 0 0 3). Therefore, positive attitudes toward corporate image can be created by societal marketing programs and communication (Chattananon et al., 2 0 0 7). Nowadays, positive corporate image is more seriously concerned because it can influence sales and profitability of the organization (Riordan et al., 1 9 9 7) as a result of having the potential of enhancing the organization's competitiveness (LeBlanc & Nguen, 1996).

Image of universities

Image is increasingly significant and is more seriously concerned in many different contexts. The discussion of different types of images such as corporate image, brand image, company image, store image and destination image and their usefulness are widely acknowledged (Ivy, 2001; Yavas & Shemwell, 1996; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Sirgy & Samli, 1985; Usaki, 2009). The studies on organizational image frequently concentrated on the business sector while the image of non–profit organization such as university image should have more attention. University image is similar to other types of image hence it is the sum of all the beliefs toward the university (Landrum et al., 1998; Arpan et al., 2003). It also recognizes the importance of forming favourable image to attract the best students, staff, and potential funding sources (Theus 1993; Treadwell and Harrison, 1994; Parameswaran and Glowacka, 1995). Furthermore, distinct image of university maintain their competitiveness in the educational market. (Palacio, Meneses and Pérez, 2002). Any university is likely to promote image to develop positioning or repositioning strategy for reason to be recognized as a world –class university, being reputation for its quality, prestige and the like (Yusof & Musa, 2012). Over the years, several authors had studied the university image in various perspectives with different methodologies. For examples, the qualitative study of Theus (1993) examined how university reputations are constructed or deteriorated. The result illustrated that university reputation depended on the evaluators' consideration of the attributes such as campus size, scope of offerings, location, appearance, diversity of students, campus morale, athletic excellences, service to community as well as institutional visibility and prestige. However, the perception of university was strongly affected by bias, interpersonal communication, third party rankings and ratings, and news coverage.

Similarly, Wilson's study (1999) of college and university images revealed that image is a product perception as well as a cognitive and communicative process. Institutional image is a perceptual view of an organization which influenced by both tangible and intangible organizational elements, communication, personal and social values. Number of dimensions including academic reputation, campus appearance location, distance from home, cost, personal attention, graduate and professional preparation, career opportunity generates the perception of a university (Huddleston and Karr, 1982). While Kazoleas et al. (2001) found that images factors controlled by a university itself such as the existence of particular programs, strength of academic programs, sport programs as well as technical facilities were stronger predictors of overall image rating compare to demographic characteristics of respondents or environment factors such as location, expense, and admission standards. In addition, the personal experience with the university had more impact on the overall image compare to media exposure to the university. Furthermore, Arpan et al. (2003) used a cognitive psychological approach to study university image among undergraduate student and the non-student via the rating of ten major US universities. The result showed that those different groups have different rating criteria. While a group of current university students used academic and athletic factor as well as the extent of new coverage of the university predicted the image of the university, the non-student group used four combine factors which encompassed academic and athletic factor, the extent of news coverage, the educational level of respondents and the respondents' level of sports fan ship predicted the image of the university. The study of Marič et al. (2010) on educational institution's image found that eight factors influence the image of organizational science faculty in University of Maribor. The most influential factor is the quality of professors and lectures while learning content is the second influential factor. Additionally, Yusof and Musa (2012) studied university image attributes through an achievement on a world class university found that several management issues such as academic excellence commitment, good teaching quality, and extensive availability of academic programs encourage this achievement. Numerous attributes can create multiple images of university which could be modified in a period of time based on the factors influencing the images at that historical moment (Kazoleas et al., 2001). From aforementioned concepts of university image, this study tries to investigate the university image of PNRU, which is a public university, together with the image of the private universities nearby PNRU because high school students who are the target persons usually make comparison before they decide to choose the university for their further education. Generally, various specific attributes such as quality of programs, sufficient and modern facilities, and commitment to providing good services to student have been considered for their selection.

Influence of image

Many studies showed that there have been the relationships between corporate image as well as reputation and retention and loyalty (Bloemer and de Ruyter, 1998; Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2001; Helgesen and Nesset, 2007), and the findings indicated that loyalty usually encourages customers to repeat their purchases consistently in the future (Oliver, 1997). In this sense, good corporate image and good corporate reputation could affect consumer satisfaction, beliefs, and behaviours (Oliver, 1980; Selnes, 1993; Johnson and Gustafsson, 2000). As the study of Lin and Lu (2010)

discovered that corporate image had significantly positive influenced on trust, consequently trust had a significantly positive influence on consumer purchase intention. Regarding to the study of influences of university image, Bryant et al. (1996) conducted the qualitative research to identify university attributes influencing enrollment. The results revealed that not only family connections to the school was the important factor for decision making to select the university, but ranking of colleges and departments, size of university and its classes as well as education quality including the emphasis on sports were also taken for consideration. As the aforementioned conceptualization of the dimensions of university image, these elements are integrated and formed to multiple images in one's mind having effects on one's attitudes and actions. In addition to the influences of university image to student's reactions, Palacio et al. (2002) investigated the relationship between university image and the satisfaction of students. Their findings demonstrated that the cognitive component of university image (e.g. facilities, university atmosphere, teaching staff, etc.) was an antecedent of the affective component. In addition, both cognitive and affective components influenced together with overall image of the university significantly influenced the students' satisfaction with the university. Likewise, the study of Helgesen and Nesset (2007) examining the relationships among service quality, facilities, student satisfaction, image of the college and study program, with student loyalty discovered that student satisfaction and image of college were directly affected to student loyalty while the image of study program was indirectly affected to student loyalty (via image of college).

METHODOLOGY

Design and sample

The research design is applied mixed method which combines quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The samples are the 12th grade students and the school administrators or teachers in 8 high schools in north area of Bangkok consisting of 4 districts, namely Bangkhen, Donmuang, Lak Si, and Saimai. The 8 targeted high schools comprised of Rittiyawannalai school, Rittiyawannalai 2 school, Donmuang Taharnargard Bumrung school, Donmuang Chaturachinda school, Rajavinitbangkhen school, Rattanakosinsompochbangkhen school, Seekan (Wattananunupathum) school, and Wat Pra Srimahadhat Secondary Demonstration School, Phranakhon Rajabhat Universtiy. The data is collected from 366 students by the questionnaire based on Likert 10-point scale for quantitative research. The stratified random sampling is employed to select respondents for study. In case of qualitative research, the focus group with 39 students is conducted including in-depth interviews with 8 school administrators or teachers of high schools.

Questionnaire design

The main concept of this study is the university image on the high school students' perspective and the influences of university image on the students' intention to study. The measurements are derived from the literature reviews relating to university image, the component, or the dimension of the images together with three pilot focus groups among high school students in order to identify the dimension of university image that potentially affects the decision making of the students. Afterwards, the questionnaire is developed to evaluate all variables on a ten-point

scale where '1' refers to the least favourable image (or strongly disagree) and '10' refers to the most favourable image (or strongly agree). Then, the factor analysis is used to assess the construct of validity of the research instrument. The six dimensions of university image are emerged that consisted of curriculum, instructor, teaching approach, facility and environment, cultural and social activities, and output. These variables of university image are used to evaluate four targeted universities, comprising of PNRU, Sripatum University, Krirk University, and North Bangkok Universiy in order to explicitly understand strengths and weaknesses of each university.

Data analysis

The demographic data of respondents are analyzed to provide frequencies and percentage. Responses to the statements relating to the image of four universities in each dimension are analyzed by calculating mean scores. Test of significance (Paired samples t-test) is conducted to determine significance differences (P<0.05) of the university image between PNRU and the three private universities. Moreover, the multiple regression analysis is performed to analyze the influence of the university image on the students' intention to study at PNRU. For the focus groups and in-depth interviews, the opinions of all participants are analyzed by content analysis.

RESULTS

Factor analysis and Cronbach Alpha Reliability

The factor analysis helps the researcher to reduce a large number of variables by analyzing the interrelationships among the variables (hence, the university image). All questions referring to the element of the university image are submitted to exploratory principal component analysis with Varimax rotation, as a result of reduction from 36 items to 20 items during the pilot test. As Comrey and Lee (cited in Cole et al., 2006) stated, if the value exceeds 0.70, it indicates excellent loading, 0.63 to 0.70 indicates very good; 0.55 to 0.62 indicates good; 0.45 to 0.54 indicates fair; and 0.32 to 0.44 indicates poor, while any values lower than .32 are abandoned (p.113). Six factors emerged and explained for 63.68% of the variance. Table: 1 illustrates the factor loading of each item.

Table 1: The factor loading of each dimension of university image

Dimensions of university image	Items	Factor loading
Curriculum	– A variety of curriculums	0.71
	– Contemporary curriculums to fulfil market demand	0.69
Teaching approach	– Focus on academic quality	0.55
	– Focus on knowledge applicability	0.67
	– Having supplementary activities for learning	0.52
Instructor	– High-profile and well known lecturer	0.54

Table 1: (continue)

Dimensions of university image	Items	Factor loading
Facility and environment	– New generation lecturer	0.55
	– The quality of lecturer guaranteed by an award	0.61
	– Modern classrooms and facilities	0.64
	– IT accessibility and digital library	0.72
	– Attractive atmosphere for learning	0.64
Cultural and social activities	– Physical environment and area of campus	0.47
	– Campus location	0.50
	– A lot of social responsibility activities	0.66
Output	– A lot of cultural activities	0.78
	– A lot of knowledge–transfer activities to communities	0.63
	– Graduates with qualifications as employers need	0.64
	– Graduates with good personality	0.46
	– Graduates with professional competencies	0.67
	– Graduates with potential to be an entrepreneur	0.69

Next, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients are calculated for the purpose of testing the reliability of the instrument whether there is internal consistency and stability of the data collected. If the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is close to one, the measurement assumes to be high internal consistency (Sekaran, 2003). Table 2 shows the Cronbach Alpha value of each variable.

Table 2: The Cronbach Alpha value of the variables

Variables	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Curriculum	2	0.80
Teaching approach	3	0.69
Instructor	3	0.66
Facility and environment	5	0.77
Cultural and social activities	3	0.75
Output	4	0.67

Demographic characteristics of the samples

As we can see in Table: 3 illustrating the demographic characteristics of the samples; hence the high school students, the majority of the students are female (59.0%). Most of the samples have studied at Rajavinitbangkhen school (22.1%). In terms of academic performance, most of the high school students get GPA in the range of 3.01 to 3.50 (39.6%). In addition, the majority of the samples have lived in Donmuang District (27.3%).

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the samples

Gender		
Male	150	41.0
Female	216	0.59
School		
Rittiyawannalai	78	3.21
Rittiyawannalai 2	30	2.8
Rajavinitbangkhen	81	1.22
Donmuang Chaturachinda	35	6.9
Seekan (Wattananunupathum)	33	0.9
Donmuang Taharnargard Bumrung	58	8.15
Wat Pra Srimahadhat Secondary	20	5.5
Rattanakosinsompochbangkhen	31	5.8
GPA		
Under 2.00	14	8.3
2.00 – 2.50	45	3.12
2.51 – 3.00	90	6.24
3.01 – 3.50	145	6.39
GPA		
Above 3.5	72	7.19
Area of dwelling		
Bangkhen	55	0.15
Laksi	55	0.15
Donmuang	100	3.27
Saimai	82	4.22
Other area	74	3.20

Comparison of the university image

Table 4: Mean score of the university image

The university image	PNRU	Sripatum	North Bk	Krirk
Curriculum	6.79	7.64[a]	6.66	6.24
Teaching approach	6.91	7.34[a]	6.62[b]	6.51
Instructor	6.84	7.35[a]	6.72	6.43
Facility and environment	6.96	7.60[a]	6.85	6.64
Cultural and social activities	7.04	7.07[a]	6.59[b]	6.43
Output	6.80	7.23[a]	6.61[b]	6.38
Overall	6.87	7.27[a]	6.63[b]	6.44

Note: a, b, c = mean difference between those universities and PNRU at the statistical level of .05

Comparing the university image of aforementioned universities by the mean score as shown in Table: 4, the results reveals that the overall image of Sripatum University is ranked at the highest position following by Phranakhon Rajabhat University, North Bangkok University, and Krirk University, respectively. Considering in each dimension of the university image, Sripatum University is the most outstanding in all dimensions. Most students have rated high scores on the image of curriculum ($\bar{x}$ = 7.64) and the image of facility and environment ($\bar{x}$ = 7.60) of Sripatum University due to the various contemporary curriculums including classrooms with modernized facilities. Nevertheless, the most excellent image of PNRU is cultural and social activities ($\bar{x}$ = 7.04) resulting from a lot of knowledge–transfer activities to communities in accordance with Thai culture activities that PNRU continually arranged as the annual events. The mean differences of the university image are tested by paired–sample t–test to determine the significant differences between the mean scores of PNRU and each private university. In case of comparison between PNRU and Sripatum University, the finding is that the image on the curriculum, teaching approach, instructor, facility and environment, and output of Sripatum University obtain greater mean scores than the image of PNRU at the statistical level of .05. Regarding to PNRU and the other two private universities, the mean scores of PNRU's image specifically in teaching approach, cultural and social activities, and output are significantly higher than those of North Bangkok University, whereas all dimensions of PNRU image are more impressive than every aspect of Krirk University at the statistical level of .05.

The influence of the university image on the intention to study at PNRU

For the other objective of this study to investigate the influence of the university image on the high school students' intention to study at PNRU, the result of stepwise regression analysis shows that the curriculum, the cultural and social activities, and the output of PNRU are statistically significant factors affecting the students' intention to enroll PNRU. As shown in Table: 5, it is indicated that these three factors have positive effects on the students' intention to study, and the output image of PNRU is the greatest impact on the students' intention due to the result of β = 0.339.

These three independent variables, hence curriculum, cultural and social activities, and output image, can explain the students' intention to study at 33.2%.

Table 5: The influence of university image on intention to study by regression analysis

Independent variables	β	t	p
Output	0.349	4.773	0.000*
Curriculum	0.172	3.016	0.003*
Cultural and Social	0.143	2.061	0.040*

Dependent Variable = intention to stud

$F = 52.226$ $R^2 = 0.339$ $R^2_{adj} = 0.332$

The perspectives of high school students, teachers, and administrators

For qualitative research which emphasizes on the opinion of high school students in the focus groups along with the school administrators and teachers suggestions from in–depth interviews, the research findings are consistent with the results of quantitative research that the Sripatum University's image on curriculum, teaching approach, instructor, facility and environment, and output is the most excellent. The reasons of all respondents are that Sripatum University has proposed the attractive contemporary curriculums as well as performed the teaching approaches focusing on practical knowledge. The well–known teachers specializing in both academic intelligence and professional career have also increased more confidence to students in the way that they could learn from such practical experience of those experts together with modern classrooms with full–option facilities and equipment. In addition, Sripatum University develop connections with business enterprises to have an agreement in providing employment after graduation. Considering to PNRU, most students recognize as the public university without high expectation as they assume private universities to provide good services due to high expenses. Besides, both students and teachers agree that PNRU is lack of proactive public relation activities particularly the communication to high schools in surrounding areas. Meanwhile, the private universities frequently update their information through various communication channels, for examples; the news letter and bulletins distribution as well as an open house activity. Moreover, coursework trial program is offered in order to enhance greater impressive experiences to high school students. Nevertheless, most respondents remain having confidence in College of Teacher Education of PNRU particularly the quality of graduates.

CONCLUSION

Among intensifying competitiveness in this period of time, higher education institutions such as a university needs to concern about the organizational image management not only to attract the targeted students but to also get acceptance and confidence from publicity. Despite being pubic university, PNRU inevitably encounters aggressive rivalry particularly with private universities. The objectives of this study are to evaluate the university image of PNRU comparing with three private universities nearby PNRU, namely Sripatum University, North Bangkok University, and

Krirk University as well as to investigate the influence of PNRU image on high school students' intention to study at PNRU. The findings reveals that the image of Sripatum University is more outstanding than of PNRU in all dimensions which consist of curriculum, teaching approach, instructor, facility and environment, cultural and social activities, and output. However, comparing to the rest of the private universities, the perception of every dimensions of PNRU image are better than the university image of North Bangkok University and Krirk University. With regards to the influence of university image on the intention to study, it is found that PNRU's images on curriculum, cultural and social activity including output have effect on high school students' decision making. The significant strategies to develop university image for PNRU could be classified as the urgent action plans and intermediate strategic plans. First of all, PNRU should initiate new contemporary curriculums that contribute the appropriate attributes and capabilities of the graduates to achieve the requirements of labour market demand. Teaching approaches enhancing practical skills together with academic disciplines should be emphasized in all programs. Moreover, it is essential to establish the special workforce team to manipulate proactive communication in order to provide up-to-date information to high schools. Next, because of a long-term reputation of College of Teacher Education, PNRU should take advantage to promote this famous standpoint as its own brand positioning. Additionally, the research works of PNRU teachers need to be supported and the benefits of the research should be publicly declared in order to strengthen PNRU reputation. It is also crucial to develop collaboration among PNRU, high schools, and business sector for the purpose of enhancing potentials of the graduates to fulfil employers' needs. Even though the findings of this study are useful for PNRU to improve the management of university image, there are two limitations involving the scope of this study. Firstly, this study narrows focus on examining the university image of PNRU comparing with three adjacent private universities while there are a lot of public and private universities in Thailand. Secondly, the university image is not only significant factor influencing the students' decision making but there are also several issues students have to take them into a consideration. Therefore, the generalization of this study might be limited. Future research should broaden the study by comparing PNRU with other public universities as well as adding other factors that is likely to have an effect on the students' selection process.

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