

DECISION INFLUENCERS AMONG ABM STUDENTS IN SELECTING A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION (HEI)

Catalino N. Mendoza, University of the East, Philippines
Leila M. Valero, Bulacan State University – Meneses Campus, Philippines
Maureen C. Paiton, Bulacan State University – Meneses Campus, Philippines
Avegail T Paez, Bulacan State University – Meneses Campus, Philippines

Abstract

The study focused on determining the factors that most influenced the decisions of the Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) students in different Higher Educational Institutions in selecting a college and/or university using an empirical approach. With the use of convenience sampling technique and quantitative approach from a well validated self-made questionnaires were identified. The mean rating and the correlational technique were utilized in the treatment of data collected. The result shows that the Cost of Education, Quality of Education, Physical Facilities, Image, and Influence of People play a significant role in the student's decision-making process. Among the five factors that were identified, the Cost of Education is the most influential factor for ABM students. The findings of the study have important implications for higher education institutions that aim to attract and retain ABM students. Institutions should focus on enhancing their reputation providing a variety of program offerings and optimizing their location to better cater the needs and preferences of ABM Students of which can also be used in developing marketing strategies and recruitment initiatives to attract and retain ABM students.

Keywords: *Education, Students' Decision-Making, Influencers, Empirical Approach, Correlation, Higher Education Institution (HEI), Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) are currently facing difficulties in attracting more students to enroll in their respective campuses. With the intensified increase in competition within the industry, many colleges and universities are now facing stiff competition for enrollees. On the

other hand, the idea of the regionalization of education significantly impacted most students selecting a particular university they preferred.

Based on the researcher's informal interviews from different walks of life, it turned out that Quality of Education, Cost of Education, Influence of People, Image of the School, and Physical Facilities are considered the five major factors decisions influence most Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) students in selecting a university. Said factors are also at the top of the mind of most families in considering their decision to send their children to university.

This is why the researchers realized the importance of education among Filipino people and this research is established.

Review of Related Literature

Education is the delivery of knowledge, skills, and information from teachers to students (Don Berg, 2015). Education is more than fostering understanding and an appreciation of emotions and feelings. It is also concerned with change "with how people can act with understanding and sensitivity to improve their lives and those of others" (Mark Smith, 2008).

According to Cyril John Barlonggo (2015). Quality education is viewed as any country's pillar of success. Restricting the Philippines' basic educational system through the K to 12 Program is a tough but strategic move by the government to ensure that it produces competent graduates who can serve as the backbone for a highly skilled and employable workforce. Increasingly, students are becoming extremely critical and analytical when choosing their educational institutions (Arnaz Binsardi & Frances Ekwulugo, 2003).

In this way, the quality of reputation and branding are two important sources for this purpose (Ann Bourke, 2000). A positive image can strongly influence the decision to attend an educational institution (Jonathan Gutman & George Miaoulis, 2003). The institution selection is determined to consider several factors such as the academic reputation and prestige of the institution (Puja Turner, 2002). The academic reputation and image of the institution are the sum of opinions, ideas, and impressions that prospective students have of the institution. Their opinion about the reputation and image of the institution is formed from word of mouth, experience, and marketing objectives of the institution.

Marvin J. Burns (2006) revealed that the campus visit was not the most useful information approach for university aspirants, it is the availability of scholarships Bridget Terry J. Long (2008) stated that financial aid, was critical to improving college access and success. But without sufficient financial aid, students would resort to loans or work to pay for their studies. He also found that the costs on academic reputation were significant predictors, however, they were of secondary importance compared with the concern for financial aid by high achieving students.

Cost of Education

Cost is related to this study because its influence concerning whether a student attends college or not is an important factor than it is on which college attends. It is important then to consider the economic reasons that students' family income may only be enough for their living.

Alberto F. Cabera & Steven M. La Nasa (2000), parental encouragement has two dimensions: motivational and proactive. In the motivational stage, parents maintain high educational expectations for their children. During the proactive stage, parents become involved in school matters, discuss college plans with their children and save for college (Laura W. Perna, 2000). According to Melanie L. Hayden (2002), the opinions of friends and former students weigh heavily on the minds of college applicants when deciding between colleges. These studies expound upon the knowledge that the more a high school student interacts with other students with college plans, the more likely they are to consider going to college.

In other words, knowing students' and their parents' expectations could be one of the effective ways that colleges must take to face the highly competitive new environment (Christoph Walther 2000, Edward St. John 2005 & Todd Schweitzer 2006).

In the study conducted by Ciriaci and Muscio (2011) both agreed with this factor as they argue that "good" universities may act as a magnet for good brains. This was supported by the study conducted by Kusumwati et al. (2010) believe that the reputation of the institution was the most significant factor in a student's decision For further study, Johnson and Ford (1997) indicate that similar factors in student choice most important to students include degree program flexibility, academic reputation, and prestige reflecting national and international recognition, physical aspects of the campus such as the quality of the infrastructure and services, career opportunities upon completion, location of the institution and the time required for the completion of the program.

Quality of Education

According to Cyril John Barlonggo (2015). Quality education is viewed as any country's pillar of success. Restricting the Philippines' basic educational system through the K to 12 Program is a tough but strategic move by the government to ensure that it produces competent graduates who can serve as the backbone for a highly skilled and employable workforce. Increasingly, students are becoming extremely critical and analytical when choosing their educational

Influence of People

Alberto F. Cabera & Steven M. La Nasa (2000), parental encouragement has two dimensions: motivational and proactive. In the motivational stage, parents maintain high educational expectations for their children. During the proactive stage, parents become involved in school matters, discuss college plans with their children and save for college (Laura W. Perna, 2000). According to Melanie L. Hayden (2002), the opinions of friends and former students weigh heavily on the minds of college applicants when deciding between colleges. These studies expound upon the knowledge that the more a high school student interacts with other students with college plans, the more likely they are to consider going to college.

Image

In the study conducted by Ciriaci and Muscio (2011) both agreed with this factor as they argue that "good" universities may act as a magnet for good brains. Which was supported by the study conducted by Kusumwati et al. (2010) believe that the reputation of the institution was the most significant factor in a student's decision and for further study, Johnson and Ford (1997) indicate that similar factors on student choice most important to students include degree program flexibility, academic reputation, and prestige reflecting national and international recognition, physical aspects of the campus such as the quality of the infrastructure and services, career opportunities upon completion, location of the institution and the time required for the completion of the program.

Physical Facilities

Another factor that has been mentioned that affects students' choices is the facilities. Fides Matzdorf (2003) studied the influence of facilities on students' choice of university. The institutional characteristics' rankings were consistent in all surveys. Sitti Rahayu Hussin & Ho Soon Tan (2003) surveyed 210 respondents from the Klang Valley to identify factors influencing the college choice decision of undergraduate students. The results confirmed that when students are selecting colleges, they depend on several criteria which include academic quality, facilities, college environment, and personal characteristics which are quite similar to the study of Geoffrey N. Souter and Julia P. Turner (2002) in Australia.

While in Asia, Chung Ming Lau (2005) stated in his study the influence of campus facilities on university choice for the student in Hong Kong. He found that among the top 16 influencing factors in the choice of university, seven factors were facilities-related. Students, in general, perceived the quality of library facilities as more important in making their choice of university followed by the quality of university grounds, availability of quiet areas, and the quality of lecture theatre. IT facilities in the university dormitory, health services, and areas for self-study were also considered important.

In the study conducted by Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2007) 364 high school students were interviewed. The respondents ranked the factors found to be important for them as follows: largeness of campus, cleanliness, landscaping, architecture, friendliness, the smallness of campus, activity, and traffic.

Conceptual Framework

Choice theory as developed by William Glasser (2000) forms the basis of the theory underpinning the study. As Glasser states, although people share similar needs, the behaviors through which individuals choose to satisfy their needs may vary greatly. Choosing schools also has an important impact on decision-making.

Research Simulacrum

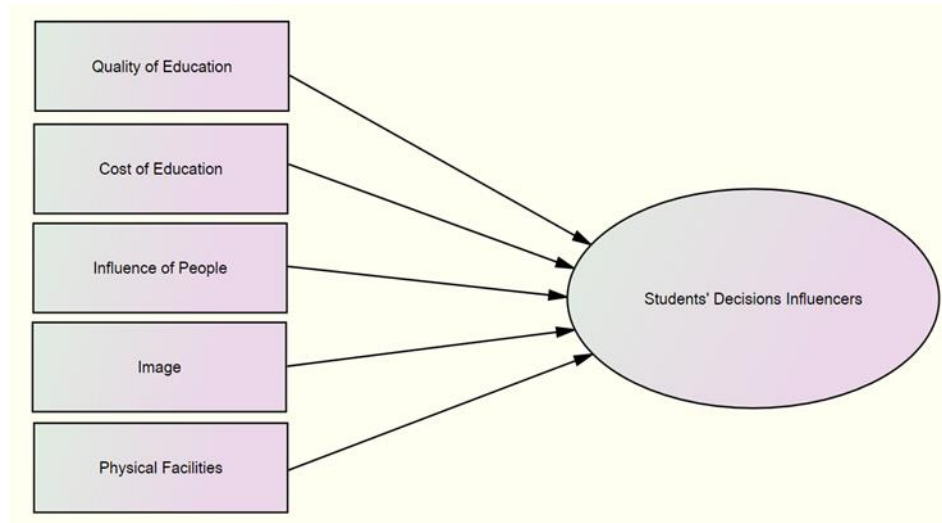


Figure 1: Research Simulacrum

The Conceptual Framework shows that this study focuses on the Students' Decisions Influencers in selecting a college and/or university. The factors to determine the respondents' decisions influencers are based on the Quality of Education, Cost of Education, Influence of People, Image, and Physical Facilities. The respondents are Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) Senior High School Students only.

Statement of Objectives

The study focused on determining the students' influencers among Accountancy, and Business Management (ABM) Students in selecting a Higher Educational Institution (HEI). Specifically,

1. Identify the key factors that ABM students consider when choosing a higher educational institution?
2. Measure the impact of the decision-making process of ABM students in terms of:
 - a. Quality of Education
 - b. Cost of Education
 - c. Influence of People
 - d. Image
 - e. Physical Facilities

3. Evaluate the most important decision influencers for ABM Students in choosing a higher educational institution.

Methods

Research Design

The researchers used the descriptive and quantitative methods to gather information [through the use of primary] data Ethridge, D.E. (2004) Descriptive research is aimed at casting light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely. The survey questionnaire will serve as the primary instrument for gathering data. Babbie and Earl's (2010) quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques.

Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon.

Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire is used as a research instrument for this study. The data used in the study are obtained from a self-administered questionnaire.

To determine the respondents' decision, the researchers used the Likert Scale as follows: mean rating scale with verbal interpretation as follows: 4 "Highly Influential", 3 "Influential", 2 "Less Influential", and 1 "Not Influential at all"

Data Gathering Procedures

The data that was gathered in this study is processed with the use of the following statistical tools:

1. Slovin's formula is used to calculate the sample size (n) given the population size (N)

and a margin of error (e). It is computed as $n = N / (1+Ne^2)$.

2. Mean rating is a calculation of the average size of an audience.

Result and Discussions

The Grand Mean of the Students' Decisions Influencers

Influencers	Mean	Rank	Verbal Interpretation
Quality of Education	3.19	2	Influential
Cost of Education	3.21	1	Influential
Influence of People	2.95	5	Influential
Image	2.97	4	Influential
Physical Facilities	3.17	3	Influential

Table 3. The Grand Mean of the Students' Decisions Influencers

It can be gleaned from the table that the greatest influencer among the student's decision in choosing their preferred school in college is the "Cost of Education" with a grand mean value of 3.21 and a verbal interpretation of "Influential."

It only shows that the most dominant reason among the identified factors or influencers is the cost of education considering the economic situation in the country. The inflation rate that closest to 6.4% according to the news, of which people have already felt the economic effects due to the continuously increasing cost of all commodities.

People tend to look for quality education, yet, cost-efficient of which, specifically the poorest of the poor are shifting their attention by considering what the government is offering free education.

Data Analysis

Based on these mean ratings suggest that ABM students consider the cost and quality of education as the most important influencers in their decision-making process when selecting a higher educational institution, with physical facilities also being an important factor. The influence of the people and the image of the institution were rated as slightly less important factors.

It is important to note that these findings are based on the specific sample of ABM students surveyed in the study and may not necessarily be representative of all ABM students. Additionally, other factors that are not included in this study may also be influencers for ABM students.

Conclusions

The Cost of Education is the most influential factor in ABM students' decision-making process in selecting a higher education institution. This suggests that affordability is a significant consideration for ABM students as they may be more sensitive due to their financial status. However, it is also evident that the quality of education, physical facilities, and image of the institution was rated relatively influential. This suggests that ABM students are not particularly focused on cost, but also place value on the overall quality and reputation of the institution as well as the physical environment and facilities.

Moreover, the influence of people, including family, friends, and social media was also rated relatively influential, indicating that external sources of information play a significant role in ABM students' decision-making process.

Overall, the findings suggest that ABM students consider a range of key factors when selecting a higher education institution, and institutions that can provide a balance between cost, quality of education, physical facilities, and positive image may be more attractive to ABM students. It is important for institutions to understand these key factors and consider them in their marketing and recruitment strategies to effectively reach and appeal to ABM students.

For Future Use

Offer affordable tuition fees and financial assistance. The cost of education is a significant factor for ABM students, so institutions should consider offering competitive tuition rates and financial aid packages to make education more accessible to students.

Focus on academic quality and reputation. ABM students are relatively influenced by the value of education and the reputation of the institution and maintain high academic standards and promote a positive reputation.

Provide modern and functional physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries. It plays an important role in attracting ABM students. Institutions should ensure that their facilities are modern, well-equipped, and conducive to learning.

Utilize the social media platform and word-of-mouth. The influence of people is an important factor in ABM students, decision-making process. Institutions should consider the use of social media platforms to connect with prospective students.

Ensure a positive student experience. Institutions should prioritize the student's experience by offering a welcoming campus environment, providing student support services, and fostering a sense of community among students.

With these recommendations, Higher Education Institutions can attract and retain ABM students and improve their overall recruitment and retention efforts.

References

Barlonggo, C.J. (2015) Berg, D. (2015), Is Educating All Children Possible?

(Based on the Status Quo, No.) By Don Berg Published July 8, 2015, 10:00 a.m

Biancardi, A. and Ekwulugo, F. (2003), "International Marketing of British

Education: Research on the students' Perception and the UK Market Penetration";
Marketing, Intelligence, and Planning.

Bourke, A. (2000), "A model of the Determinants of International Trade in

higher Education", the Service industries Journal, Vol. 20, No 1, pp. 110-3

Brennan, L. (2001), How Prospective student choose Universities. A buyer

behavior perspective, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Melbourne,
Australia.

Brown, C. (2009), "University courses selection and services marketing "

Marketing intelligence and Planning Vol. 27 Issue: 3, pp.310-325, [HTTPS://doi.org/10.1108/02434500910455227](https://doi.org/10.1108/02434500910455227).

Burns, M.J. (2006), - Factors influencing the college choice African- American

students admitted to the college of agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (Master
Thesis)- University Missouri-Columbia Missouri.

Cabrera, A.F. and La Nasa, S.M. (2000), Understanding the College-Choice Process

- A new direction for Institutional Research- No. 107 San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gutman, J. and Miaoulis, G. (2003), "Delivery: An application in Higher Education ". *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp, 105-11.
- Hayden, M.L. (2000), "College choice influences: Urban High school students Respond. *Community College*".
- Hosler, D. and Gallagher, K. S. (1987), *Studying student college choice. A three-phase model and the implications for Policymakers. College and University*. 2(3), 207-221.
- Lau, C.M. (2005), *The Impact of Physical Facilities on student choice of university in Hong kong. Hong kong: Karl Paoyan Youseki the University of Hong Kong*.
- Leslie, L.L. (2007), *The economic value of Higher Education*, American council on Education, Macmillan.
- Levitz, R.N. (2007), Long, B.T. (2008), *The effectiveness of financial aid in improving college enrollment: Lessons for policy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Matzdorf, P.I. (2003),
- Noel-Levitz, Inc. (2007), *Why did they enroll? The factors influencing college choice; national research report*. Iowa City, IA: Author.
- Peng, Z. (2000), "Modelling and testing the effect of country, Corporate and brand image or consumer's product Evaluation and purchase intention". Paper presented at the ANZMAC 200 visionary marketing for the 21st Century: Facing the Challenge Conference.
- Perna, L.W. (2000), "Differences in College Enrollment Among African-Americans, Hispanics and Whites" *Journal of Higher Education*, VOL.71, No. 1, pp. 177-141
- Raposo, M. and Alves H. (2007), *A model of University choice: An exploratory approach*. Retrieved October 20, 2008, from http://mpra.ub.unimuenchen.de/5523/1/MPRA_paper_5523.pdf
- Siding, S.M., Hussin, S.T., & Tan, S.H. (2003), "An Exploratory study of factors influencing the college choice decision of undergraduate students in Malaysia". *Asia Pacific Management Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 259-280.
- Schoenherr, H.J. (2009), *Beyond academic reputation: Factors that influence the college of the first choice for high achieving students (Doctoral dissertation)*. University of South Florida, Florida.

- Soutar, G.N. and Turner, J.P. (2002), Students' preferences for University: A conjoint analysis. *The International Journal of Education Management*, 16(1), 40-45
- Urbanski, R.A. (2000), Factors influencing student college choice at a northeastern Minnesota tribal college (Doctoral dissertation). University of Minnesota, Minnesota.
- Vossenteyn, H, (2005), Perception of student price-responsiveness: A behavioral economics exploration of the relationship between socio-economic status, perception A financial incentives and student choice.
- Wagner, K. and Fard, P.Y. (2009), Factors influencing Malaysian students' intention to study at a higher education institution. Retrieved August 21, 2011, from <http://eprints.oum.edu.my/365/1/wagner-fand.pdf> Walter, St.J.S.