

ABSTRACT

“SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE MARKETING ACTIVITIES AT THANG LONG UNIVERSITY”

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INTRODUCTION

1. Reason for thesis selection

Education, especially tertiary and higher education is highly prized and respected in any country and it is not an exception in Vietnam because it plays an important role in human resource development. Together with an extensive net-work of state-run universities, a large number of private ones are growing at a fast pace thanks to the government's policies in socializing and diversifying education system. There is a matter of concern nowadays if education is considered a **market** and educational institutions are market players who try their best to win in a competitive environment. If yes, like other kinds of businesses, schools need to carry out marketing activities to raise brand awareness, better and promote their products in order to attract and meet the customers' needs. Thang Long University the first one in private education sector is an example. Being a member of the organization and seeing the needs of the university for a Marketing strategies to improve its brand awareness and for further development, I would like to propose a thesis on the topic of '**SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE MARKETING ACTIVITIES AT THANG LONG UNIVERSITY**'. The thesis is expected to

analyze Marketing and PR activities at Thang Long University to figure out the strengths and weaknesses and suggest practical solutions to better the image of Thang Long University.

2. Objectives of the research

- study on the field of Marketing in general and Marketing in Education in particular as well as propose suggested solutions to attract the good students' enrollment.

- propose solutions to improve the quality of education at Thang Long University.

- analyze the current marketing activities at Thang Long University and make suggestions to improve these activities for the period from 2010 to 2020.

3. Scope of the research

Subject of the research: The research will study the application of marketing activities at Thang Long University, investigates the needs and wants of the undergraduates and graduates so as to find the ways for appropriate Marketing solutions for Thang Long University.

Scope of the research: Due to the limitation of time, the research only focuses on the study of Marketing theory, external and internal factors influencing the operation of Thang Long University as well as proposes suggested solutions for Thang Long University.

4. Research Methodology

Method of qualitative analysis (analyzing facts of Thang Long University) is used to collect data and information for the research's completion

5. Expected results

- propose solutions and the feasibility of applying marketing in education, especially in the case of Thang Long University.

- point out the distinguished characteristics of Marketing in education and the necessity of applying marketing in education into universities in Vietnam, especially Thang long University.

6. The structure of the thesis

Apart from the Introduction and Conclusion, the thesis is divided into 3 chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: General theoretical background of marketing service and marketing education.

Chapter 2: The analysis of the application of marketing in education at Thang Long University

Chapter 3: Suggested solutions to improve the marketing activities in education at Thang Long University.

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF MARKETING SERVICE AND MARKETING IN EDUCATION

1.1. Overview of Marketing Service

1.1.1. Definition of Marketing Service

1.1.1.1. Definition of Service

The definition of services is known to “*include all economic activities whose output is not a physical product or construction, is generally consumed at the time it is produced, and provides added value in forms (such as convenience, amusement, timeliness, comfort, or health) that are essentially intangible concerns of its first purchasers.*” (Services Marketing, McGraw-Hill, P.3)

1.1.1.2. Definition of Marketing Service

Services marketing is known as a form of marketing which focuses on selling services and a form of marketing based on relationship and value.

1.1.2. General characteristics of Marketing Service

1.1.2.1. Characteristics of Service

Services are regarded as actions, process and performances.. The nature of services can be noted as: **Intangible, Heterogeneity, Inseparability and Perish ability:**

1.1.2.2. The concept of market in Marketing Service

. The concept of market in service marketing is divided into 6 basic types known as: Customer market, Interactive market, Supplier market, Employment market, Power market, and Internal market.

1.1.3. Mar-Mix in Marketing Service

1.1.3.1. Product policy

A product in general is a broad concept of things or set of activities that bring values to customers. Customers don't actually purchase goods or services but they purchase the benefits and values that goods and services offer them.

1.1.3.2. Pricing policy

Price plays an important role in services marketing mix and has a large impact on profit and also decides the value of the primary service that is offered to customers. Price is considered a decisive factor in building enterprise's image and positioning the service being offered.

1.1.3.3. PlacePolicy

Distribution channels in service industry is a broader concept in comparison with the traditionally known ones. Distribution channels are comprised from such factors as service products, negotiation, information, ownership and promotion.

Particularly, distribution channels in service consites of Direct channel and Indirect channel.

1.1.3.4. Promotion Policy

Communication in service includes such things as advertisement (1), personal communication (2), promotion (3), which will be discussed in detailed in the thesis.

1.1.3.5. People Policy

Human factor plays a significant part in service marketing. Therefore, the enrollment, training, motivating and managing human resource have great impact on the success of service marketing.

1.1.3.6. Process Policy

A customer service procedure is a way of doing a routine practice. Service procedures include the entire process, mechanisms and information flows and values from the service production to service consumption.

1.1.3.7. Physical Evidence

Physical evidence are the combination of both tangible factors such as facilities, uniforms, location... and intangible factors such as experience, skills... which help to build up brand and company's image.

1.2. Overview of marketing activities in Education

1.2.1. General concepts of Marketing in Education

1.2.1.1. Needs in Education

Need can be defined as a psychological stress that makes peoples feel lack of something. Needs in education, therefore, can be learnt as the desire to get education.

1.2.1.2. Education Market

Like any other goods and services, education regarded as a type of service, also has its own market. It is noted that in educational market, beneficiaries have no capacity to bargain. In this market, more or less, educators have the right to establish the lecture's contents, teaching methods and teaching and studying system.

1.2.1.3. Customers in Education Market

Customers in educational market are students who use and benefit from educational packages and products. And then their achievements and knowledge will be applied to their social activities.

1.2.2. Mar-mix in Education

1.2.2.1. Product policies

Educational products in a market economy are all things that educators provide during their training progresses. They consist of well – educated people with professional qualifications and knowledge, skills and techniques.

Continuous innovation and improvement in educational products with aim to raise educational quality are decisions related to educational products, including policies on occupational and professional training and policies on training methods.

1.2.2.2. Pricing policies

To an educational institution, price is the quantity of payment or compensation given by customers in return for training activities. In this situation, price is at reasonable rate to students and enough for educational institution to run and develop.

1.2.2.4. Promotion-mix policies

Promotional activity is to deliver information about organizations or enterprises to customers through communication and media channels. In educational market, education institutions consider it as the way to inform about benefits and interests from their educational products.

1.2.2.5. Human policies

Human resources play a vital role in maintaining the operation of education and training institutions. Teachers and trainers who are in charge of deliver education products to “customers” directly, always are considered as key objectives. Training institution could reference some below options:

- Hire or recruit high qualified and teaching experienced trainers
- Conduct training courses to current trainers and teachers.
- Support teachers and trainer in self learning and professionally researching.

1.2.2.6. Customer Service Procedure policies

There are many factors also distribute image of training institutions:

- Disciplines and regulations
- Environment, sanitation and landscape
- Inside and Outside security

1.2.2.7. Physical Evidence policies

This is clear evidence that in every sector, infrastructure is essential and deeply relates to cost and tuition. Therefore, physical evidence policy is one of factor of Marketing – Mix in education that requires matching with other policies on pricing, distribution

1.3. The application of Marketing in Education in Vietnam

1.3.1. Overview and experience of the application of Marketing in Education in some countries

General marketing was established from the beginning of the 20th Century in some developed countries. Together with development in economy, science and technology and society, there are major advances in the field of education. Hence, marketing has become crucial part in this market.

1.3.2. Analyzing the quality of tertiary education in Vietnam

Current status and quality of tertiary education in Vietnam have been concerned considerably by researchers and departments and offices' managers. There have been a lot of discussions and conferences about these matters.

1.3.3. Marketing in Education and the necessity of Marketing in Education in Vietnam

Marketing in education is essential on levels and every particular training objective because of some reasons as follows:

- The existence and development of educational institutions depends on their enrollment.
- The necessity of applying Marketing measures to educational market is derived from main function of Marketing – meeting customers' demands.

- Educational institutions can find out their strengths and weaknesses, through Marketing activities in order to submit ideas and solution to complete policies more effectively and perfectly.

CHAPTER 2: THE ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF MARKETING IN EDUCATION AT THANG LONG UNIVERSITY

2.1. An overview of Thang Long University

2.1.1. The history of Thang Long University

Thang Long University, which is the first private university in Vietnam, was formally established in 1988 under the Decision No 1687/KH-TV dated 15th December 1988 of the Ministry of Education and Training.

Thang Long University awards diploma in higher education by national education system's standards.

The operation of Thang Long University has been applying for their founding charters, follow:

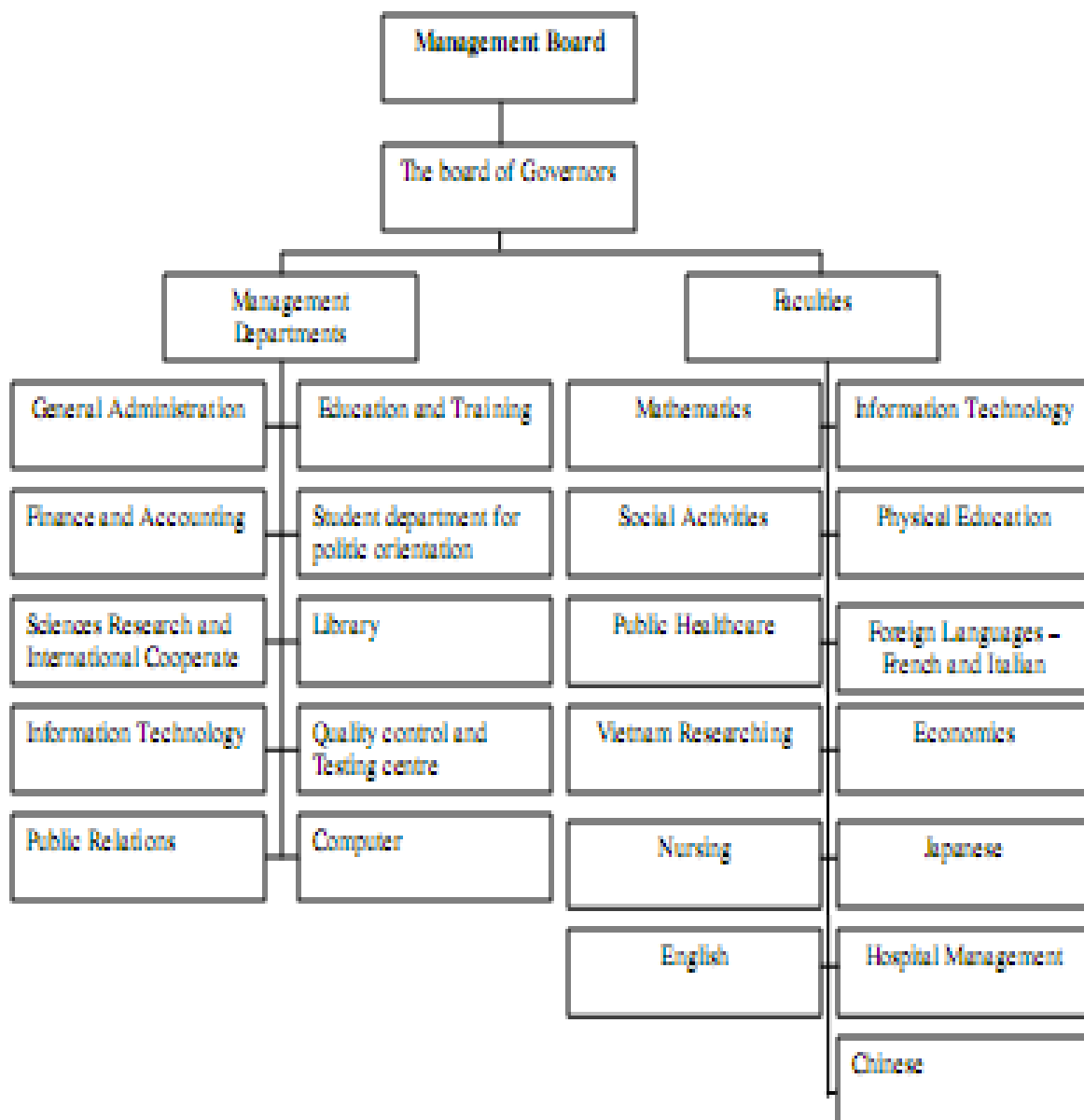
- Supply high quality of higher education.
- Apply teaching and learning methods suitable to individuals.
- Monitor and manage training program effectively
- Management Board needs to collect audiences' expectations and needs
- Aim to develop education system that can integrate into international market, nurture individually particular talents and supply labor market with high qualified employees.

2.1.2. The human resource of Thang Long University

2.1.2.1. The University Structure

According to the Decision No 441/TG of Prime Minister dated 09th August 1994, Thang Long Private University Center changed into Thang Long Private University. At present, the management board includes 07 members, led by PhD – Prof Hoang Xuan Sinh (the Chairman) and the board of governors is led by PhD.Le Van Mot– the Rector.

Diagram 2.1: Thang Long University's Organization Chart



2.1.2.2. Students

The statistics on quality of higher education at Thang Long University from 2006 to 2010 shown that various training programs of Thang Long University attract learners such as Foreign Languages, Accounting or Finance and Banking. The rate of students who can find jobs in one year after graduation partially described the quality of these training programs (at least 89% of total).

2.1.2.3. Teaching Staff

Teaching staff is one of crucial factors of any educational institution. Hence, all educational institutions should pay attention to develop their teachers and trainers. Thus, Thang Long University always considers the development of teaching staff as the first priority.

Thang Long University currently has got 155 official teachers including 12 Professors, 8 Assistant professors, 8 Doctors and 88 Masters and 119 visiting teachers including 67 Professors, Assistant professors and Doctors.

Year by year, quality and quantity of teaching staff at Thang Long University have been improved considerably, that aims to develop the quality of teaching and training and promote the image of Thang Long University.

2.1.2.4. Physical Evidence

At present, Thang Long University is concerned as one of the most modern and well-equipped universities in Vietnam. This is also considered as one of the most attractive strengths of the university and highly appreciated by the students and their families and known as one of the driving force to the decision of students' enrollment.

2.2. The current situation of Marketing activities of Thang Long Universities

2.2.1. The Thang Long's activities environment analysis

2.2.1.1. The external environment analysis

2.2.1.2. Internal analysis

2.2.1.2.1. Strengths

2.2.1.2.2. Weaknesses

The external and internal analysis can be summarized in the table below:

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation -A good and healthy educational environment. -Focus on social demands to make development plan. -Physical evidence is well equipped. • Training programs -Many types of training are design in accordance with social demand. -Modular course is applied to match students' demands. • Human Resource: -Young teachers and lecturers who are eager to devote to the education career. -Invite foreign lecturers from cooperated international universities. -Lectures are asked to work under organized and effective principles with self-aware spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External factors: -Vietnam invest in education and training with high rate of GDP -Vietnamese always concerns education as first priority to develop and build up their future. -Economic development raises the needs of developing people's skills and knowledge -Many people have demand to better their majorities. • Internal factors: -As the first non-public university in Vietnam, Thang Long University is evaluated highly in many faculties such as foreign languages, accounting... -Acceptable entrance requirements in comparison with many other public universities.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation: -Long term plan on evaluating educational quality is not made -High tuition fee in comparison with other private universities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Thang Long University has not been well known in educational market. -Compete with not only non-public universities but also other public universities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programs: <p>-Distance training courses are not available</p> <p>-Inconvenient timetable of training courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resource: <p>-Lack of senior lecturers and lecturers who have distinguished degrees.</p>	
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2.2.2. The necessity of the application of marketing activities to Thang Long University

2.2.2.1. The analysis of the needs of the students preparing to enter Thang Long University

The main market of Thang Long University is all people who are seeking to high level and professional knowledge and accepting the training programs. It is common knowledge that students finished high school program are one of the most important customers of the university. They also have some main demands, including:

- Study their favorite disciplines that can help them find a job to build a stable and bright future.
- Study at a university - higher education that can partially utilize their ability.
- Improve and identify their particular capabilities to seek a chance to achieve success in future.
- Some of them register to enter the university according to their families' wants.

2.2.2.2. The analysis of the undergraduates of Thang Long University

Every year, there are around 10.000 students attending both full time and part time training courses at Thang Long University.

Together with potential customers, Thang Long University also pays attention to the undergraduates' demands such as:

- Study their favorite disciplines
- Study interesting subjects with qualified teachers and trainers: knowledge, skills and teaching methods.
- Graduate from a university which has become more and more prestigious to have more chances to find good jobs.
- Take part in activities such as team building, sports, volunteering programs, charity to utilize their skills and abilities to distribute society.
- Wish to show up their abilities in a friendly environment and get completely educational service during their courses.

2.2.2.3. Feedback of the graduates

According to the graduates' evaluation, Thang Long University is trustworthy private university. The university has improved and developed their education quality potentially through various faculties and training programs on higher levels.

2.2.3. Thang Long University market positioning

2.2.3.1 Identifying the target market

Thang Long University also has identified the target market including students having high school diploma and individuals having higher education demands.

2.2.3.2. Market positioning

Due to understanding current social demands, Thang Long University is known as multi-faculties university. The students gain professional and practical knowledge through training programs and other activities such as contests, team

building and festivals. All knowledge and skills can serve many practical purposes when students graduate. This also is shown through graduates' evaluation about the university's quality.

2.2.4. The current situation of the application of Mar-mix

2.2.4.1. Product policies

Thang Long University always pays attention to product policies.

- Policies on Faculties
- Policies on objections and contents of training programs:
- Training programs, tests and reviews, course schedules, test

schedules always come with full instruction from the university.

2.2.4.2. Pricing policies

Thang Long University is the first private university in Vietnam so its budget almost all comes from distribution of students. According to the financial report of Thang Long University in 2009, the budge mainly came from the tuition fee, was appropriate 97% of total budget.

In the future, Thang Long University has plans to draw up their budget from some other sources such as Science research and Technology transfer.

2.2.4.3. Distribution policies

There are three matters related to distribution policies, including identifying the enrollment channels, selecting the types and methods of training, choosing the training venues.

2.2.4.4. Promotion mix policies

Thang Long University has used advertisement and Marketing channels to develop and inculcate the impressive image of the university in customers and community as well.

2.2.4.5. Human policies

If human policies are regarded as one of marketing factor, educational institutions are required to have professional teaching staffs and high qualified

management board. Thang Long University has had many activities to make human policies work well..

2.2.4.6. Procedure policies

Efficiency of business operation depends on operation and management structures considerably. Thang Long University has been continuously completed and strengthened effectiveness in operation and management through building a complete structure.

2.2.4.7. Physical Evidence Policies

Physical evidence is regarded as an important factor that related to decision of students. Nowadays, everyone wants to study in the best and most professional conditions. Since established in 1988, Thang Long University has managed to build its image as the most prestigious private university in Vietnam with various training programs and professional physical evidence.

2.2.5. Assessing the effectiveness of marketing activities at Thang Long University

Since Thang Long University was established in 1988, the university has developed and become one of the most prestigious private university in Vietnam. The university has paid attention to the important factors in Mar-mix to implement its marketing activities. However, weaknesses still remain and need appropriate solutions.

CHAPTER 3: SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE MARKETING ACTIVITIES IN EDUCATION AT THANG LONG UNIVERSITY

3.1 Thang Long University's development strategies from 2010 -2020

3.1.1. Development point of view and objectives from 2010 – 2020

Although Thang Long University is one of non public university in Vietnam higher education system, the university always supplies high quality educational products following its charters. With a view to ensure and keep its sustainable development, Thang Long University has identified the objectives in more details below:

- Training and educate qualified labors for society.
- Guide students through needs of labor market.
- Research and develop science and technology.

3.1.2. Identifying target market

According to the strategic development and targets, Thang Long University has been focusing on its target market including high school graduated students and individuals having demands on higher education.

In following years, the university is having plans to attract international students to promote the image and position in the area and the world.

3.2. Suggested solutions to improve the marketing activities at Thang Long University

3.2.1. Solutions to education products at Thang Long University

3.2.1.1. Diversifying education products

So far, Thang Long University supplies training programs for bachelor degree in 18 disciplines. The university also has developed and enrolled new majors such as Social activities and Nursing that aims to satisfy social demands.

The university also tailors many cooperation programs with international universities in the major of business administration and international economics. Thanks for development of technology, E-learning and E-library can help many

students approach training programs of Thang Long University. In addition, part – time course in nursing also are available for learners who want to join classes after working time. It should be noted that modular courses of Thang Long University could help students arrange their time and set up their own schedule actively and dynamically.

3.2.1.2. Upgrading the quality of education products

At present, Thang Long University is applying many measures of testing and evaluating such as writing tests, assignments, essays, projects. All mentioned measures of testing and evaluating are used in the mid - semester tests. The university designed details and particular regulations on testing progress. Teachers and trainers of each faculty have responsibilities on tailoring testing contents of their disciplines.

The university has stated their standards on graduation from training programs. By these criteria, training programs must supply learners with both professional and practical knowledge in order to help them be self confident in their knowledge and skills. Due to the quality of graduation could be regarded as strong proof of the university's training quality.

In order to approach the education quality of neighbor countries and all over the world, Thang Long University are focusing on its advantageous disciplines such as accounting, business administration and finance and banking, and developing new majors such as social activities and nursing.

Through global cooperation, the university should negotiate with abroad universities and countries that recognize and identify the diplomas of Thang Long University.

Thang Long University committed to provide students with a good and healthy education environment which has been implemented in various ways to meet students' satisfaction.

3.2.2. Solutions to the pricing policies at Thang Long University

Financial plans are made according to the general planning processes. At the end of years, the management board states about planning financial programs for the next year to all departments in the university. Based on their lecture programs and responsibilities, each department will make their annual financial plans.

Due to prices of education programs at Thang Long University cost higher than that of other private universities, the university should pay attention to improve the quality of educational products. Understandably, educational products with high quality might involve students who concerned about joining education programs.

3.2.3. Developing the teaching staff's professional competencies and improving the quality of Education

Developing the teaching staff is always regarded as the top priority and the most important factor in the development of Thang Long University. For years, the university has been concentrating on developing the teaching staffs and officers with a view to improve the quality and expand the scale of education programs.

The management board, teaching staffs and officers of Than Long University are enthusiasm for the field of education and training. Additionally, they are also keen on upgrading their professional qualification and applying their management skills.

3.2.4. Solutions to promotion mix

3.2.4.1. Advertising activities

Advertising by word of month is always considered to be one of the most effective channels to a business in long term period. In the field of education and training, the customers who used the education products could issue right and exact evaluation about the quality of educational institution. Therefore, Thang Long University concerns about the review from current students at the university and also the graduates who applied gained knowledge into their works. The

university has done the survey on the educational quality. Additionally, the university should contact directly to employers that the graduates are working for to collect their feedback. Thanks for the good feedbacks, the image and position of the university could be strengthened and promoted. Therefore, it is recommended that the university should make a long term plan for evaluating the quality of educational programs.

3.2.4.2. PR activities

At Thang Long University, the department of public relations officially established in 2009, plays an important role in directly carrying out PR activities. It is undeniable that PR is one of the most effective activities in the marketing mix policies. The main task of the PR department is to organize activities and events and to promote the image of Thang Long University through cooperation with 19 clubs at the university, especially marketing club. In order to complete the task, PR department built cooperation with newspapers, press and communication organization such as VTV2; VOV, Tien Phong Newspaper, Thanh Nien, Dantri.... Notably, Thang Long University holds the annual event of Open Day that aims to provide information about Thang Long University to high school students and their families in middle of March. From 2009, visiting to high schools in Hanoi and other provinces where a number of students come from, is also one of PR activities at Thang Long University. However, these PR activities have just carried out recently from 2009 when the PR department was established officially.

However Thang Long University's PR plans have not been launched and implemented more than one year. Due to limited budget for PR programs, PR department of Thang Long University has not been able to use all PR channels effectively. Additionally, the staffs in this department still need to improve and apply themselves in professional knowledge and skills.

Thang Long University should concentrate on PR activities that could bring effectiveness in promoting the image of Thang Long University.

3.2.4.3. Direct marketing activities

Direct marketing activities is defined that organizations directly contact individuals and/or organizations who need to know information about organizations. Thang Long University has also implemented direct marketing activities through visiting high schools in Hanoi and other provinces to introduce about the university to students. Besides, the university also has activities combine PR activities and direct marketing activities such as the annual event of Open Day in middle of March.

Additionally, Thang Long University should focus on direct sources including:

- High school in Hanoi and other provinces
- Graduated students from other universities who have demands on upgrade their diploma with Master courses.

However, direct marketing activities haven't been estimated as importantly as they should be. Therefore, Thang Long University should promote activities to find out their potential customers who need details of information about the education and training programs at the university.

3.3. Supported solutions

3.3.1. Establishing of a system to study students' needs

Researching information and needs of students means looking for customers' demands in educational market. Due to changeable demands of customers, this activity should be implemented frequently and in time. Therefore, it is required professional operation in order to gain right information.

Thang Long University should establish a system to study students' needs that must work frequently with a view to update the needs, wishes of students. The university should concentrate not only on current students studying at the university but also the graduates and students having demands on the educational programs. Thanks for that, the image and position of Thang Long University could be promoted and strengthened nation wide and abroad.

3.3.2. Cooperating with universities at home and abroad for a better brand image and position

Global cooperation is one of the most important priorities of Thang Long University. In recent years, Thang Long University has kept building and developing the cooperation relationship with various abroad universities and international organizations. The university has gained tremendous achievements in many fields such as education, science research.... Thank for these achievements, Thang Long University could position itself in the recent educational situation.

On 14th January 2011, the team of professors from San Jose State University – USA visited Thang Long University to discuss about corporation between the two universities. According to the bilateral agreement, Thang Long University signed corporation in Educational Programs in Social Activities.

3.3.3. Establishing Marketing department at Thang Long University

Although the PR Department was established in 2009, a particular Marketing department at the university would play a crucial role in implementing Marketing activities. Therefore, It is very necessary to make the university aware of the effectiveness of Marketing activities. Then the university could launch right strategies and guidelines. Marketing activities could be implemented disjointedly and fragmentally unless there is a particular and professional Marketing department.

Besides, it is very necessary to improve staffs in PR department to become a team of competent people. Human is always key factor. Without them, the department can not be established and operated. Thus the human resource development should be paid due attention, which helps the PR department stronger and well-developed. The management board of Thang Long University is aware of the issue. Thus, they paid attention and invest in human resource development, especially in the PR department.

CONCLUSION

Applied Marketing in the field of education and training could be considered as a new topic. Together with development in economy, politic and society in Vietnam after joining WTO, Marketing will more and more promote its role in many fields including education and training. Due to higher people's social consciousness, everyone wants and needs to apply themselves and improve their knowledge and skills through training programs. While private universities and education centers have been developing and compete together in the educational market, Thang Long University should apply Marketing activities to improve its position effectively. Therefore, this thesis has offered marketing related solutions in order to improve Marketing operation at Thang Long University. Notably, it is recommended that diversifying education products and improve products' quality could help the university's products meet social demands.

The thesis proposed two marketing related solutions to promote education and training activities at Thang Long University including marketing mix factors based solutions and additional solutions.

a. Marketing mix factors based solutions:

- Diversifying the educational products and develop new disciplines.
- Improve quality and quantity of teaching staffs.
- Improve quality of educational products through researching practically
- Advertise and promote the image and position of the university in order to deliver information about the university to target markets.

b. Additional solutions:

- Establish the Marketing department at the university that could specialize in developing and implementing related activities.

- Check out and complete marketing operations.

On the basis of practical analysis, the thesis analyzed the Marketing activities at Thang Long University. Accordingly, the university's opportunities, objective challenges and abilities are explored to develop strengths and fix weaknesses. Thanks for that, effective and suitable solutions for the Marketing operation could be found.

The thesis aims to propose solutions related the field of marketing service in order to give a new direction and completely change the way to think of educational institutions. Accordingly, educational institutions could determine customers' expectations and adapt to meet these expectations subjectively. Thanks for these solutions; I strongly believe that Thang Long University could become one of the most prestigious universities in Vietnam in not – too - distant future