

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In the age of globalization, English language skills are essential since it is necessary for working people in every career and accomplishment of their goals. At present, more and more Thai people are becoming aware of the significance of English language usage. Higher skills of English usage lead to more advancement of working people's careers. As a result, the demand of working people for English language learning has increased dramatically and has created a great number of English language institutions in every area. These institutions are established to respond to and serve the needs of working people who require more knowledge and skills of English to match with the specification of their current and future work roles. Many new institutions are established every year but most of them do not exist. To serve working people needs, it is necessary to be aware of what factors influence decisions to take English courses at any language institutions among working people. It will be advantageous to the language institutions to arrange suitable programs to satisfy them.

According to "Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions" (Kotler & Fox, 1995, p. 65), facing an environment of constant change such as increasing competitions, their students population change each year, faculty and staff change, etc., education institutions must constantly identify and implement improvements in what they do and how they do it. For example, curricula need updating and revision, procedures need to be upgraded with new needs and new technologies. In addition, all employees consisting of faculty, staff, and administrators need access to constant training and development opportunities. As a consequence, they can improve, provide valued services to their students and other customers, and aim to meet customer needs and expectations. When meeting the problems, education institutions have to identify those problems as they may affect the institutions' ability to attract and retain students. Declining enrollment, outdated curriculum, other higher quality institutions nearby, and financial crisis are examples of serious problems that the institutions have to eliminate and to find out an effective way to survive.

According to “Marketing Management” (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 31), businesses today face a number of challenges and opportunities, including globalization, the effects of advances in technology, and deregulation. They have responded by changing the way they conduct marketing in very basic ways. The most popular one is marketing mix which has been defined as the set of marketing tools the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives. These tools are categorized into four broad groups which are the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. They represent the sellers’ view as the marketing tools for influencing buyers.

The benefits of the research are to indicate the factors that influence working people’s decision making on taking English courses provided at any language institutions. The more factors we know, the more satisfaction we can deliver. Therefore, we can arrange the right things to closely meet the customers’ needs.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 What are the factors that influence working people’s decisions to take English courses at language institutions?

1.2.2 What is the most significant factor influencing working people’s decisions on taking the English courses at language institutions?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 Main Objective

To find out the factors that influence working people’s decisions on choosing to attend English courses at language institutions.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1.3.2.1 To ascertain the most significant factors that influence working people when making decisions on taking English courses at language institutions.

1.3.2.2 To investigate the factors that influence working people’s decisions on taking English courses at language institutions.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

Definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

1.4.1 Working people means the people who are working in profit or non-profit organization such as the government, private enterprises, both local and international, or donors, etc. They can be in either management or operation level in any careers.

1.4.2 Working people's decisions means the result of working people's thoughts that makes them take the English courses at language institutions.

1.4.3 English courses means the courses in the subjects and the four skills of English: listen, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar including TOEFL, TOEIC, and Business English in elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels.

1.4.4 Language institutions means organizations in Bangkok that teach English. They can be owned by private enterprises or universities.

1.4.5 Product means the goods and services that the institutions provide for working people who attend its English class. The goods and services factors consist of quality and variety of the course contents, quality of the instructors, opportunity for practicing, quantity and quality of administrative staff, textbooks, and classrooms including teaching equipment.

1.4.6 Price means the value of an English course which working people justify as cheap or reasonable related to the product provided.

1.4.7 Place means the area at the center of community in Bangkok where the English institutions are located. Variables consist of location and convenience for traveling.

1.4.8 Promotion means the marketing activities that the institutions perform in order to influence or convince working people to take the English courses. The activities consist of discount, install payment, advertisement, and promotion campaigns.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to survey people who are working in profit or non-profit organization, in either management or operation level, and in any careers. The study also focuses only on English institutions which are located at the center of Bangkok in

locations which are convenient to access. The quota sampling is used to conduct the survey because the surveyor cannot identify the exact population size due to lack of statistical record. The samples are focused on working people who are taking English courses at the targeted language institutions. The sample size is 310 working people. The period of the study was four months beginning from November 2008 until the end of February 2009. The time frame of the study was divided into four phases: planning, implementing, analysis, and reporting.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study of factors influencing working people's decisions to take English courses at language institutions is significant in several respects.

1.6.1 It will provide some useful information for the English language institutions to understand better the factors influencing working people to make decisions on taking the English courses.

1.6.2 It will help the institutions to focus on dealing with the significance in order to pursue their competitive advantages in the market.

1.6.3 It can be useful for other researchers who would like to conduct further studies.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of factors influencing working people's decisions to take English courses at language institutions is divided into five chapters in this paper. The first chapter concerns the introduction part which consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of terms, scope of the study, and significance of the study. The second chapter involves a review of literature relevant to the study. It consists of four parts: purchasing decision, consumer behavior, integrate marketing mix, and relevant research. The third chapter describes the methodology which consists of subjects, materials, procedures, and data analysis. The fourth one is the results which provide the findings from the survey by questionnaires. The statistical data is presented in forms of percentages and ranking. The last chapter deals with the summary of the study, summary of the findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.