

Marketing Strategies Affect the Decision of Users of the Sport Science Center, National Sport University

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The National Sport University has a role to provide technical and resources to improve people's health. The study aimed to determine factors related to marketing strategy that affected a decision to use resources of the sport science center at the National Sports University.

Method: A cross-sectional study was used to collect data among the study sample who were the sport science center users. A validated questionnaire and interview guide were used as the research instruments. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Results: A total of 396 officers who used the services participated in the study. Majority of the participants were males (60.1%), aged between 20-30 years (45.7%), holding or being studying a bachelor degree (64.1%), and being students (31.3%). The overall marketing mix factors affecting the users' decision to the sport service was high. Both personal and process factors were detected at a high level. Seven strategies were found to be effective to improve the service: product, price, distribution channel, marketing promotion, personnel, physical evidence and process.

Conclusion: The National Sports University should focus on the personnel and process to improve the effectiveness of the service. The university should also concern all seven aspects to improve the sport service.

Keywords: Marketing strategy, Decision, Service user

Introduction

Nowadays, people in Thailand have a better economic status and are able to spend their time getting better health. Exercise is one of the most favorite behaviors in their daily life activities to improve their health. There are widely provided sports centers in both public and private sectors. The Thailand government has also promoted the specific policy to encourage people to engage in sport regularly. This is clearly presented in the Part Four of the National Development Strategy on the Strategy One Enhancement and Development of Human Capital Potential (Goal Four) which is stated to promote people health by exercise to reduce the risks of health problems (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board Office of the Prime Minister 2016). The 6th National Sports Development Plan (2017-2021) is also focused on Thai citizens' health improvement by sports. Obviously, sport could improve people's health and then reduce the national medical expenses or the cost of healthcare services of the country eventually [1].

Having a good stage of health, it reflects the quality of human resources of a nation to be able to drive the country economically (Sitthichai Chumwangwapi, 2008).

The National Sports University has a major role in the improvement of sport resources and services to people. The main functions include testing physical fitness, organizing training programs to enhance physical fitness for athletes and providing the services in both teaching and training for general exercise. The university needs to improve both the quality and quantity of exercise resources and services to ensure that people could easily access the services. However, it was reported that a small proportion of people engaged in the services of the university. Then understanding its market and services could improve the number of people to access the services of the university.

To improve the service, marketing would be one of the critical points. There are seven elements of marketing that required to focus: (1) products which is

determined on the quality, safety, sufficient, and being modern style of the equipment; (2) price which is determined on the cost to access the services including membership registration; (3) channel of the services and location which are determined on the space of the service and service time that appropriate for the users; (4) marketing promotion which is determine on the promotion to encourage people to decide to use the service; (5) personnel which is determined on the service mind of the staff including the knowledge and skill on their services to their customers; (6) physical evidence which is determined on the cleanliness of the place and bathroom, adequacy of , rooms and its safety while using and; (7) process which is determined on necessary step of service to their customers.

Then, the study aimed to use seven elements of marketing strategies to assess the quality of the services of the university.

Methodology

A cross-sectional was used for data collection. The users at the Sports Science Center of the National Sports University, Thailand were invited to participate in the study. In 2021, more than 36,000 users were recorded. The samples were collected from four regional sport centers in Thailand: (1) northern region, the samples were collected from Chiang Mai sport campus (11,470 users); (2) central region, the samples were collected from Ang Thong sport campus (8,310 users); (3) northeastern region, the samples were collected from the Chai Ya Phum sport campus (10,414 users); and 4) southern region, the samples were collected from : Ya La sport campus (5,820 users).

The sample size was calculated by the standard formula of a cross-sectional study, and it required 396 samples.

A validated questionnaire was used for collecting data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part one, five questions were used to collect general information of the participant. Part two, seven sub-topics of the marketing strategies were included: (1) products, (2) prices, (3) location of service, and (4) marketing promotions, (5) personnel, (6) physical evidence, and (7) processes.

First, participants were asked five questions regarding the produces: (a) Having many types and sizes of exercise equipment; (b) Equipment have a quality and modernizing; (c) Having sufficient quantity of exercise equipment; (d) Exercise have presented cleaning and safety; and (e) Equipment meet the needs of users. Then the participants were asked to respond on one of five rating scales from poor to very satisfactory.

Second, participants were asked five questions regarding the price of services, participants were asked five questions: (a) Having subscription suitable rates for the services; (b) Having reasonable rates while

comparing to the quality of the equipment; (c) Having reasonable rate for one time/monthly/yearly; (d) Having a notice for membership fees or expenses clearly; and (e) Having value/reasonable while comparing to the services.

Third, participants were asked four questions regarding the location of the services, participants were asked five questions: (a) The location is near the residence or workplace; (b) Traveling to services easily and quickly; (c) Having fast entrances and exits to the location; and (d) Having enough and convenient parking place.

Fourth, participants were asked five questions regarding the marketing promotion, participants were asked five questions: (a) It is advertised and promoted by brochures/websites; (c) Having public relations/news/activities regularly; (c) Having public attraction; (d) Always disseminating knowledge about exercise; and (e) Having promotions at special prices/discount prices or give gifts.

Five, participant were asked five questions regarding the personnel, participants were asked five questions: (a) Service personnel are courteous, speak politely, considerate, generosity; (b) Service personnel are attentive, enthusiastic and ready to serve; (c) Service personnel are knowledgeable and have the ability to provide services such as being able to answer questions, clarify doubts and give advice; (d) Officers provide services with honesty in their performance of duties such as not asking for compensation, not accepting bribes, not seeking unlawful benefits, etc; (e) Service personnel come to work on time.

Six, participants were asked five questions regarding physical evidence, participants were asked five questions: (a) It is clean, spacious and well ventilated; (b) There are toilets that are hygienic/clean enough and have separate male-female sections; (c) There are separate changing rooms for men and women that are suitable, safe and adequate; (d) There is a service that is safe for the property; (e) There is an adequate supply of service points, such as arranging a resting corner for sitting and waiting or sit and read a book.

Last, participants were asked four questions regarding the process of the services, participants were asked five questions: (a) The service process is not complicated, cumbersome and it is flexible; (b) The services are convenient and fast; (c) Service is provided on a first-come, first-served basis, back and equal; and (d) It is convenient and fast to pay for the services.

Process of data gathering

People who accessed the services in four selected sport campuses in 2021 from the lists were randomly selected. Selected participants were requested in response to the questionnaire. Before completing the

questionnaire, participants were provided information about the study and asked to sign on the consent form.

Statistical analysis

Data were cleaned and entered into the excel. Data were analyzed and presented in the form of frequency, mean, SD.

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Results

A total of 396 participants participated in the study. Majority were male (60.1%), aged 20-30 years (45.7%), holding or studying a bachelor degree (64.1%), and being students (31.3%) (Table 1).

Table 1 Characteristics of participants

Characteristics	n	%
Total	396	100.0
Sex		
Male	238	60.1
Female	159	39.9
Age (year)		
< 20	47	11.9
20-30	181	45.7
31-40	110	27.8
>40	58	14.6
Education		
Under Bachelor degree	77	19.4
Bachelor degree	254	64.1
Master degree	61	15.4
Doctoral degree	4	1.0
Occupation		
Student	124	31.3
Private company employee	84	21.2
Government officer	103	26.0
Business owner	82	20.7
Other	3	0.8

According to the seven elements of the market strategy, the personal and process were found to have the highest impact on deciding to use the sport services: Personal (4.49). and process (4.49). While the promotion was detected in the lower power (3.92) on the decision of users to access the services. However, in terms of the overall interpretation, all seven elements of the market strategy impacted the decision on whether to use or not use for the sport service at a high level.

Table 2 Access sport service according to the seven market strategies (n=396)

Marketing strategies	Score		Decision level
	mean	SD	
Product size	4.34	0.69	High
Price	4.33	0.66	High
Distribution channels	4.38	0.65	High
Promotion	3.92	0.85	High
Personnel	4.49	0.61	High
Physical evidence	3.97	0.93	High
Process	4.49	0.59	High

Discussion

The overall participants were males and younger. This may be because males have more personal intention to have physical fitness and keep themselves in a healthy stage. Males may earn more income than they would be able to access the sport services. Moreover, our study found that students were detected as the dominant in access to the sport service. This might be because the students have a very clear class schedule and are able to spend time exercising. This coincides with the study of Dechasetsiri (2018) who reported that being males, younger age, and having were the influencing factors to access sport clubs in Bangkok city. A study conducted by Amorn and Kultawachawichai (2012) reported being male, aged 18-25 years, having a bachelor's degree, having a career as a student, and having an average monthly income of 5,000-25,000 baht per month were predicted factors to engage in sport service. In the report, it was also presented that location was one of the significant factors to support people to use sport service.

While Wongsawat (2011) reported that those people aged 36-45 years, and being business men and having high income were the traits of the people who engaged into the sport service in the big cities. A study conducted by Srisilp (2015) reported that there were no differences between sex to access the sport service. Srisilp also reported that people preferred to exercise with simple machines in private sport centers. The location was one important to access the sports center as well.

A study conducted by Kamolsuth et al. (2007) also reported that the majority of people who accessed the sport center were males, aged between 19-25 years, single status, bachelor's degree holders, and working in private company employees with average income of 25,000 baht or more. While the location and registration fee or service fees of the sport center were detected as the key factor of continuing in exercise.

While a study conducted by Phungbangkruai (2009) reported that the marketing promotions were a significant factor in increasing the number of users. While the factors of location, modernized style of the center or other physical evidence were the significant supporting factors to access the sport services including a variety of the activities or exercise equipment. While, the personnel and location factors were found as the key factor for continuing use the services and paying a long-service use registration fee.

Jai-ngam (2016) reported that personnel in the center with a good appearance was a key factor to use the sport service. While the price, location and process were also detected as the significant factors of the success of the sport services. This coincides with a study conducted by Somboonwan (2015), who reported that personnel, building and location, process, and price

were the influencing factors to access the services. Thanchot (2019) also reported that the three top factors related to deciding to use the service were personnel, products, and location. Wongsawat (2011) reported that product, service aspect and location were the influencing factors to access the sport services. Chapromma (2017) reported that factors affecting the decision-making of users were promotion, service equipment, location, convenience, price and personnel.

Conclusion

Even Thai people interested in exercise to keep their health, there are many factors affecting the personal decision to access the sport service. Male, younger age, and high education are more focusing on improving their health than other characteristics. To increase the sport service, the center should keep qualified personnel and reduce unnecessary processes to all services. Personal who are working in the service should be the ones who have a service mind. While, the process of the services should be kept simple and easier.

However, encouraging other age categories and females are one of the challenges of the university to promote the healthy stage of Thai population. Distribution of the locations to be easy for access for everyone would be one important strategy.

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