

# ADVERTISING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THROUGH ONLINE MEDIA DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION: A CASE STUDY IN THE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE OF KING MONGKUT'S UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY NORTH BANGKOK

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**Abstract:** The coronavirus pandemic has slowed down the economy. People reduce their costs including a budget for education, therefore, educational institutions are undeniably affected. Moreover, the education industry has to adapt to the New Normal way of life. To survive in the market, they must rely on the Internet, not only for online studying but also as the main advertising channel. The researchers have realized this change. Thus, the mixed-method research was conducted with the aims of 1) to study how Thai and Cambodian students are open to online media, promotional videos, for deciding on a university and 2) to propose ways to produce online media, promotional videos, to make a university more famous. Dividing into two steps, firstly, the researchers collected the data via an online questionnaire from 400 students in the upper secondary schools and found that selecting a university, the samples were interested in details of basic information and admission, academic matters and job opportunities, university life and friendships, and international networks. The most popular channels providing the information were Facebook, YouTube, and websites. They also preferred video clips presented by current university students with real experiences. To be confirmed as an example, the researchers had created the video clips to promote the International College of KMUTNB based on the result and invited 12 participants to watch the videos and share their opinions through the in-depth interviews. Most of them agreed that the videos were helpful and relevant to their needs. In conclusion, this research result can be a benefit for advertising educational institutions.

**Keywords:** online media, university, educational institutions, social distancing, new normal, COVID-19

## Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the overall economy, both businesses and households. Most people have to reduce all of their costs including a budget for education, therefore, educational institutions are undeniably affected. Due to maintaining social distancing and lack of communication, they may lose many prospective students. In this situation, the education industry has to be adapted to the New Normal lifestyle. To survive in the market, they must rely on the Internet as the main platform for both online studying of current students and advertising the institutions to the prospective group.

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The researchers have been interested in producing a promotional video because it is popular online media among the target audiences and attractive with pictures and sound. Is a university promotional video effective? What is the content in a university promotional video that the audience looking for? What is the channel that the university promotional video should be posted on? This research is going to reveal the answers.

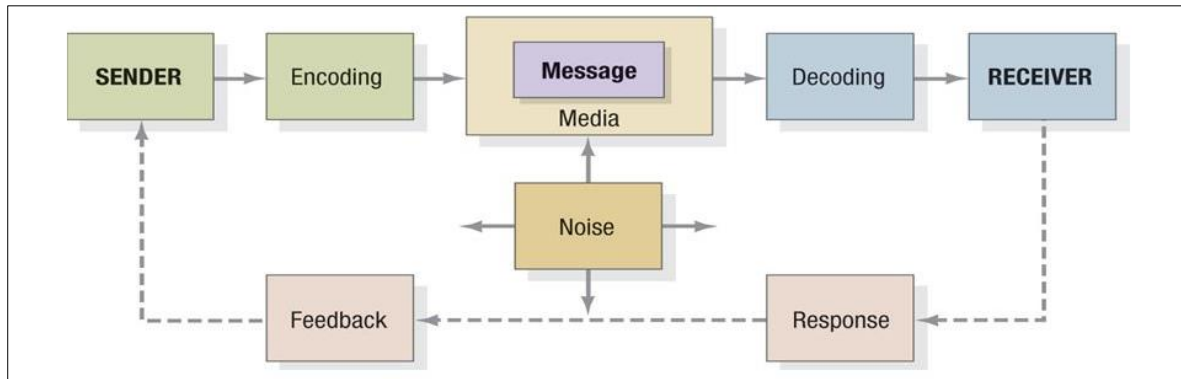


Figure 1: Elements in the Communication Process (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018)

According to the Model of Elements in the Communication Process of Kotler and Armstrong (2018), universities are the sender while prospective students are the receiver. To communicate with them, universities have to provide effective messages and media that reach their need. Schramm (1973) explained that influential factors in a person's choice of exposure to news are experience, assessment, background, education and environment, capability, character, mood, and attitude. Moreover, Klapper (1960) also mentioned the four-stage selective media exposure model including 1) selective exposure, 2) selective attention, 3) selective perception and interpretation, and 4) selective retention. In this case, prospective students will choose to receive the information based on their interests. For example, if they would like to study in a business field, they will emphasize searching and remembering the details but ignore some unmatched by their intention. The research of Witthawat Laomalaw (2019) revealed that factors affecting students' decision to study for an undergraduate degree at Khon Kaen University were the university's reputation and social factors praise for knowledge and ability. However, from the study of Decision-making to Further Study at a Higher Education Level of High School Students at Thasala Prasitsuksa School, Jutarat Suknoi (2020) found that high school students with gender, grade, and further study requirements are different in deciding to further study at higher education was different. For the educational institution, personal reasons affected decision-making to further study in higher education.

## **Objective of the Research**

1. To study how Thai and Cambodian students are open to online media, particularly university promotional videos, for deciding on a university
2. To propose ways to produce online media, particularly university promotional videos, to make a university more famous.

## **Materials and Methods**

The mixed-method research was conducted by dividing into two steps based on the objectives.

1. First research objective: the quantitative approach employed a survey research method, a one-shot description study by a close-ended questionnaire that was distributed through an online channel from Thai and Cambodian students in the upper secondary schools. A multi-stage sampling, selected people are split into sub-groups at various stages to make it simpler for data collection, was employed, i.e., 1) purposive sampling and 2) accidental sampling, in order to collect data from a minimum sampling of 400 participants. By applying the Yamane formula, reliability of 95 percent and deviation of no more than 5 percent could be achieved (Yamane, 1973).
2. Second research objective: the qualitative approach employed a semi-structured interview research method which relies on asking questions within the predetermined thematic framework. The researchers had created the four video clips to promote the International College of KMUTNB based on the first step results as a tool and purposively invited 12 participants, nine Thai students and three Cambodian students, to watch the videos and share their opinions through the in-depth interviews.

## **Results and Discussion**

*Reporting the results and discussion are separated into two parts based on the objectives*

### **Research result and discussion of the objective 1**

To study how Thai and Cambodian students are open to university promotional videos for deciding on a university, the total participants in the quantitative method were 400, and a further breakdown showed that 50 percent for Thai, 48 percent for Cambodian, and 2 percent for others. Most of the respondents were between the ages of under 18 to 22 years of age. 50 percent of the respondents were female, 47 percent for male, and the remaining 3 percent were LGBT. With regards to livelihood, most of the respondents were high school students interested in applying for a university with a monthly household income of not more than 50,000 Thai Baht.

The research found that, for deciding to apply for a university, they respectively wanted to consider the information of 1) faculty, 369 respondents or 92.25 percent, 2) location, 354 respondents or 88.5 percent, 3) university life, 352 respondents or 88 percent, 4) tuition fee, 333 respondents or 83.25 percent, and 5) job opportunities, 317 respondents or 79.25 percent, 6) Coursework, 329 respondents or 82.25 percent, 7) Major, 320 respondents or 80 percent, 8) international networks, 276 respondents or 69 percent, 9) Reputation, 265 respondents or 66.25 percent, 10) Scholarships, 237 respondents or 59.25 percent, and 11) Alumni, 216 respondents or 54 percent, as shown in table 1.

*Table 1: Numbers and percentages of wanted information for considering a university*

Information	Numbers	Percentages
Faculty	369	92.25
Location	354	88.5
University life	352	88
Tuition fee	333	83.25
Job opportunities	317	79.25
Coursework	329	82.25
Major	320	80
International networks	276	69
Reputation	265	66.25
Scholarships	237	59.25
Alumni	216	54

Their favorite media for finding university information were 1) recommendations from teachers and seniors, 373 respondents or 93.25 percent, 2) recommendations from families, 310 respondents or 77.5 percent, 3) university websites, 306 respondents or 76.5 percent, 4) admission Facebook fan pages, 288 respondents or 72 percent, and 5) review videos on YouTube, 286 respondents or 71.5 percent, 6) university Facebook fan pages, 269 respondents or 67.25 percent, 7) recommendations from friends equal to open house and workshop projects, 266 respondents or 66.5 percent, 8) web boards, 264 respondents or 66 percent, 9) university YouTube channels, 231 respondents or 57.75 percent, 10) search engines, 230 respondents or 57.5 percent, 11) government grants, 229 respondents or 57.25 percent, and 13) university expo, 204 respondents or 51 percent, respectively as shown in table 2.

*Table 2: Numbers and percentages of favorite media for finding university information*

Media	Numbers	Percentages
Recommendations from teachers and seniors	373	93.25
Recommendations from families	310	77.5
University websites	306	76.5
Admission Facebook Fan Pages	288	72
Review videos on YouTube	286	71.5
University Facebook Fan Pages	269	67.25
Recommendations from friends	266	66.5
Open house and workshop projects	266	66.5
Web boards	264	66
University YouTube channels	231	57.75
Search engines	230	57.5
Government grants	229	57.25
University expo	204	51

Focusing on university promotional videos, keywords that they used for searching the videos were 1) university names, 286 respondents or 71.5 percent, 2) names of a major of study, 217 respondents or 54.25 percent, 3) faculty names, 54 respondents or 13.5 percent, and 4) names of famous alumni, respondents or 54.25 percent, respectively as shown in table 3.

*Table 3: Numbers and percentages of keywords for searching for university promotional videos*

Keywords	Numbers	Percentages
University names	286	71.5
Names of a major of study	217	54.25
Faculty names	54	13.5
Names of Famous alumni	30	7.5

Moreover, they respectively watched the university promotional videos on 1) Facebook, 338 respondents or 84.5 percent, 2) YouTube, 230 respondents or 57.5 percent, and 3) websites, both official websites of universities and other websites partnering with the universities, 129 respondents or 32.25 percent, as shown in table 4.

*Table 4: Numbers and percentages of channels for watching university promotional videos*

Channels	Numbers	Percentages
Facebook	338	84.5
YouTube	230	57.5
Websites	129	32.25

For sources of the videos, they preferred to watch 1) videos created by current students with direct experiences, 164 respondents or 41 percent, 2) official videos created by universities, 124 respondents or 31 percent, and 3) videos created by influencers talking about a university, 112 respondents or 28 percent, respectively as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Numbers and percentages of preferred sources of university promotional videos

Types of the videos	Numbers	Percentages
Videos created by exciting students with direct experiences	164	41
Official videos created by universities	124	31
Videos created by influencers talking about a university	112	28
Total	400	100

Emphasizing their behaviors toward university promotional videos, it was found that the majority, 202 respondents or 53 percent, watched the videos occasionally; 93 respondents or 24.25 percent, watched them sometimes; 45 respondents or 22.25 percent, watched them often; 27 respondents or 6.75 percent, never watched them; and 19 respondents or 4.75 percent, always watched them, as shown in table 6.

Table 6: Numbers and percentages of frequency for watching university promotional videos

Frequency for watching promotional videos	Numbers	Percentages
Occasionally	212	53
Sometimes	97	24.25
Often	45	11.25
Never	27	6.75
Always	19	4.75
Total	400	100

From the data collected in the part of finding similar videos after watching a university promotional video, it was found that the majority, 182 respondents or 45.5 percent, strongly agreed to do this behavior; 104 respondents or 26 percent, agreed to do; 89 respondents or 22.25 percent, agreed to do in moderate; 22 respondents or 5.5 percent, disagreed to do; and only 3 respondents or 0.75 percent of the sampling, strongly disagreed to do. The data is present in table 7.

Table 7: Numbers and percentages of behaviors for finding similar videos after watching a university promotional video

Finding similar videos after watching a university promotional video	Numbers	Percentages
Strongly agree	182	45.5

Agree	104	26
Moderate	89	22.25
Disagree	22	5.5
Strongly disagree	3	0.75
Total	400	100

Furthermore, in the part of researching a university after watching its promotional video, it was found that the majority, 194 respondents or 48.5 percent, strongly agreed to do this behavior; 122 respondents or 30.5 percent, agreed to do; 72 respondents or 18 percent, agreed to do in moderate; 9 respondents or 2.25 percent, disagreed to do; and only 3 respondents or 0.75 percent of the sampling, strongly disagreed to do. The data is present in table 8.

*Table 8: Numbers and percentages of behaviors for researching a university after watching its promotional video*

Researching the university after watching its promotional video	Numbers	Percentages
Strongly agree	194	48.5
Agree	122	30.5
Moderate	72	18
Disagree	9	2.25
Strongly disagree	3	0.75
Total	400	100

For the part of visiting a university website after watching its promotional video, it was found that the majority, 182 respondents or 45.5 percent, strongly agreed to do this behavior; 133 respondents or 33.25 percent, agreed to do; 66 respondents or 16.5 percent, agreed to do in moderate; 15 respondents or 3.75 percent, disagreed to do; and only 4 respondents or 1 percent of the sampling, strongly disagreed to do. The data is present in table 9.

*Table 9: Numbers and percentages of behaviors for visiting a university website after watching its promotional video*

Visiting the university website after watching its promotional video	Numbers	Percentages
Strongly agree	182	45.5
Agree	133	33.25
Moderate	66	16.5
Disagree	15	3.75
Strongly disagree	4	1
Total	400	100

For the part of sharing a university promotional video to friends after watching it, it was also found that the majority, 197 respondents or 49.25 percent, strongly agreed to do this behavior; 111 respondents or 27.75 percent, agreed to do; 67 respondents or 16.75 percent, agreed to do in moderate; 19 respondents or 4.75 percent, disagreed to do; and only 6 respondents or 1.5 percent of the sampling, strongly disagreed to do. The data is present in table 10.

*Table 10: Behaviors for sharing a university promotional video to friends after watching it*

Sharing a university promotional video to friends after watching it	Numbers	Percentages
Strongly agree	197	49.25
Agree	111	27.75
Moderate	67	16.75
Disagree	19	4.75
Strongly disagree	6	1.5
Total	400	100

Last but not least, for the part of sharing a university promotional video to friends after watching it, it was found that the majority, 226 respondents or 56.5 percent, strongly agreed to do this behavior; 90 respondents or 22.5 percent, agreed to do; 75 respondents or 18.75 percent, agreed to do in moderate; 5 respondents or 1.25 percent, disagreed to do; and only 4 respondents or 1 percent of the sampling, strongly disagreed to do. The data is present in table 11.

*Table 11: Numbers and percentages of behaviors for applying to the university after watching its promotional video*

Interested in applying to the university after watching its promotional video	Numbers	Percentages
Strongly agree	226	56.5
Agree	90	22.5
Moderate	75	18.75
Disagree	5	1.25
Strongly disagree	4	1
Total	400	100

**Research result and discussion of the Objective 2**

To propose ways to produce university promotional videos making a university more famous, the video clips promoting the International College of KMUTNB were created as the object of study for the qualitative approach. They were divided into four main topics including 1) basic information of



the college and admission, 2) academic subjects and job opportunities, 3) university life, friendships, and online classes during the COVID-19, and 4) international students. The videos were covered all needed information and presented by students of the college, both Thai and Cambodian, based on the results in the quantitative research.

Confirming the research results of the first objective, the in-depth interviews after watching the promotional videos found that due to complete and helpful information presented by the current students with real experiences, most participants were satisfied with the video as they mentioned: “The video is interesting, helpful, and can suggest guidelines on how to prepare to enroll in the university in the beginning.” (participant01, personal communication, 2022), “It is very beneficial because the videos are produced by people with real experiences, and some information cannot find on the Internet.” (participant02, personal communication, 2022), “All of the information in the video cannot be found in Google or YouTube, but the information in the video came from the experience of the students.” (participant03, personal communication, 2022), “Listening to a student with real experiences gave me a strong belief in the video content.” (participant10, personal communication, 2022).

Besides, presenting by current students not only could provide the necessary information but also could make the participants get used to the college easier. As the participant mentions, the informally conversation among current students in the video represented friendships in the community: “I felt stressed and afraid that there will be no friends, but the video can reduce my stress.” (participant04, personal communication, 2022), “I feel the college is a home because it has friendly and has good relationships among students and their teachers.” (participant05, personal communication, 2022).

The promotional videos could finally motivate the participants to search for more information of the college. They would like to visit the official university website and the campus: “The video gave enough information about the school, and made me interested and want to visit the university website for learning more about the college.” (participant11, personal communication, 2022), “The video is fun to watch, and made me want to visit the university.” (participant12, personal communication, 2022). Importantly, the videos could create the need. One of the participants would like to apply for the college because of the video: “After watching the video, I want to study in the International College.” (participant06, personal communication, 2022). However, it noted that the participants who would like to study a Bachelor of Business Administration tended to be interested in the college after watching the videos, but participants interested in other faculties said that although the content of the videos was very good, they were not interested in applying. The videos still could not change their intention.

## **Discussion**

Based on the Model of Elements in the Communication Process (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018), as the sender, universities will send their information through media focusing on reputation and social factors (Laomalaw, 2019) to prospective students who are the receiver. Nevertheless, each prospective student has a selective exposure system (Klapper, 1960) by opening to information that suits his experience, background, education, capability, and character (Schramm, 1973). The result is related to the study of Suknoi (2020) that explained that personal reasons affected decision-making to further study in higher education.

## **Conclusions**

According to the research results of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, a promotional video is an important tool for online advertising educational institutions not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but also during a normal situation because it can provide formal information in a friendly way like an edutainment. It also motivates audiences to search for further details, share the content with friends in their network, and apply to the universities. For use of this study's results, the recommendations have been divided into four topics aimed at the content, channel platform, presenter, and video editing.

The recommendations to create an effective video are as follow:

1. Video content should be divided into short episodes based on topics of the necessary information, such as basic information and admission, academic matters and job opportunities, university life and friendships, and international networks.
2. The promotional video should be posted on Facebook, YouTube, and websites that are official websites of universities and other websites partnering with the universities. In detail, it should be posted on YouTube first and shared that link on Facebook and the websites so that the views of the video can be combined.
3. Current students with real experiences should be a presenter in a university promotional video because they can provide specific deep insights and are believable. Moreover, a fun conversation between the students in the video will show cozy relationships in that university community.
4. Video editing should be smooth with high-quality pictures and sound.

In addition, doing further research, researchers should emphasize word-of-mouth marketing toward educational institutions on which prospective students rely most.

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