Effective Stimuli for Private University Admission: A Case of Bangladesh Army University of Science and Technology (BAUST)

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effectiveness of a selected set of stimuli that affects university admission including the role of advertisement as a stimulus with specific reference to Bangladesh Army University of Science and Technology (BAUST), Saidpur. However, one other university was also considered for analysis to correlate data to facilitate understanding if there is any peculiarity specific to BAUST. During the survey, all available newly inducted students of different departments were served with the structured questionnaire in order to determine their reasons behind choosing BAUST for their alma matter. The total number of respondents from BAUST was 167 and that was 51 from University of Asia Pacific (UAP). The findings of the study indicate that ventured stimulus intended to induce through advertisements is mostly less effective than usual instinct. Besides, efforts invested in advertisement are found to be negatively correlated to the financial investment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising and different other activities by private universities are very common to create stimuli among the potential students to get them admitted in the university. Reasons are obvious. Students are the lifeline for the survival or the success of the private universities. Besides quality of the faculties, imparted quality of education and facilities available in the university, advertisement, incentives and promoting word of mouth are usually endeavoured by the universities and a significant budget is allocated for accomplishment of such activities successfully. Irony of the fact is that, rationalizing the expenses incurred and the outcomes of different activities are often not analysed or estimated for decision making. Instead, decisions are made based on either discussion in meetings without analytical or knowledgeable inputs or following the practices around.

Although the scenario as above is believed to be common in almost all the private universities in Bangladesh, the study is focussed on Bangladesh Army University of Science and Technology, Saidpur with a view to understanding the related issues and to facilitating decision making on the subject matter. However, one other university students are also surveyed with the intention to add further confidence on the outcome of the study. Besides this, financial aspect of BAUST is also considered for relating outcome with the present expense pattern and to facilitate recommendation based on the analysis.

This research is based on the structured questionnaire survey and consequent primary data only. Analysis done is primarily descriptive in nature however statistical method is followed for validation of the outcome with reference to other university data as collected.

Findings of this study show that education quality and the university environment act as the most important stimuli for admission decision. For that, referral and word of mouth are found to be much more effective than advertisements. Again, traditional methods of advertisement are found to be less effective than the new generation digital advertising mode. In addition to that, it is also found with reference to BAUST that, mental orientation of universities is yet not aligned with the current trend of advertisement effectiveness and thus incurring greater expenses to lesser effective media.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Private universities globally face fierce competition in attracting prospective students. As the educational landscape evolves, the role of effective stimuli, particularly in the realm of advertisement, becomes crucial. This literature review explores existing research on the various advertisement strategies employed by private universities to enhance their appeal and ultimately drive admission rates.

Recent studies (Smith et al., 2020; Chen & Wang, 2019) emphasize the significance of digital marketing in targeting the tech-savvy demographic. Social media platforms, search engine optimization, and personalized online campaigns have proven effective in engaging potential students.

The establishment and communication of a strong brand identity contribute significantly to a private university's appeal (Kim & Lee, 2018). Research indicates that a compelling brand image enhances perceived value and influences the decision-making process (Johnson & Smith, 2017).

Leveraging testimonials and success stories from alumni can create a powerful emotional connection with prospective students (Lee & Park, 2019). Positive narratives about academic achievements, career successes, and campus life can shape a favourable perception.

Effective advertisement strategies have a direct correlation with admission rates. Research by Brown and Davis (2021) demonstrated that universities implementing a comprehensive and targeted advertising approach observed a notable increase in application numbers and admission yield.

While advertisement strategies play a pivotal role, challenges such as budget constraints, evolving marketing trends, and ethical concerns (Stewart & Thomas, 2020) need careful consideration. Universities must adapt to dynamic marketing landscapes while maintaining transparency and authenticity in their promotional efforts.

This literature review underscores the integral role of advertisement strategies in stimulating private university admissions. A multi-faceted approach, encompassing digital marketing, brand building, and the incorporation of testimonials, proves effective in attracting and retaining prospective students.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

To investigate the impact of advertisement on stimuli for private university admission as the case of Bangladesh Army University of Science and Technology (BAUST), a comprehensive questionnaire survey was conducted at the university premises on the newly admitted students. Besides this, an online survey was conducted on the students of the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) as a matter of convenience with a view to correlate consistency of results so as to facilitate figuring out the trend in general.

All available newly admitted students across different programs of BAUST on a particular day were surveyed and in that 167 students participated in the survey. Online survey was conducted only on the students of Civil Engineering (CE) department of UAP, and 51 students participated in the survey. In that consideration, it may be said that clustered convenience sampling technique was followed for selecting the sample.

Simple structured multiple-choice questionnaire covering all the items of advertising efforts as practiced by BAUST was designed to add convenience in response. Same question set was used for both online at UAP and face to face paper pencil survey at BAUST. Besides, precaution was taken to set the questions in conversational fashion with a view to have free flow responses. To do that, few of the demographic information and personal attribute related questions were also set.

To understand the distribution of responses, calculation of responses using percentage were performed for each question and responses from all the questions across both universities were considered. This percentile distribution as obtained is presented in the form of bar chart for a quick and intuitive understanding of the similarities or dissimilarities in the responses.

To quantify the relationship between responses from the two universities, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each pair of corresponding questions to determine measure of the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables.

To develop an overall perception about the responses across both universities, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated again combining all the responses from all questions and was interpreted.
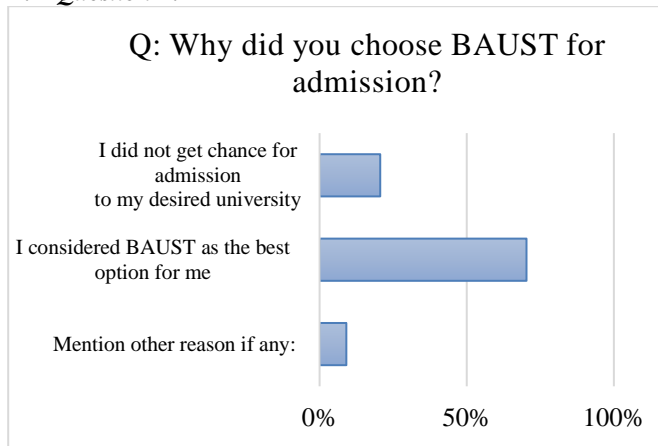
As the study was conducted with a focus to one private university only, the outcome of the study may not be considered to be applicable universally, however, addition of one other university data for validating the outcome adds to the level of confidence on the generalizability of the findings.

This research aims to contribute valuable insights to private universities seeking to enhance their advertisement strategies for admission purposes and aims to provide actionable insights for universities aiming to optimize their promotional strategies. The inclusion of a comparative analysis with another private university enhances the study's relevance and potential impact.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Besides other questions related to demographic information and personal attributes, there were five questions those were specific to the subject of study. Each of these question responses are graphically presented below with the percentile data and analysis.

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A. Question 1:

Q: Why did you choose BAUST for admission?

The bar chart above clearly reveals that the institutional reputation of BAUST plays as most significant stimulus for admission at BAUST. Besides that, public universities are of usual preference of the students because of the usual perception and financial involvement issues. Comparison of responses at BAUST and UAP are given in percentile form below. Pearson Correlation coefficient of the dataset is +0.984 which is very close to +1, thus the finding of this question has very strong positive linear relationship.

		Questions	UAP	BAUST
Question	A	I did not get chance for admission to my desired university	27%	21%
	B	I considered BAUST as the best option for me	71%	70%
	C	Mention other reason if any:	2%	9%

B. Question 2:

Q: What is the reason(s) for you to consider BAUST as your best option?
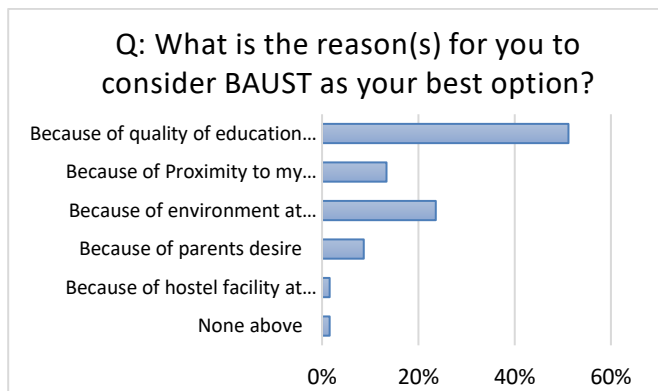
The quality of education is surely the most important criteria for admission decisions, at least for the matured ones. Interesting to note that, younger generation too are giving highest weightage to the quality. The second most important stimulus for admission is the environment at BAUST. Naturally the location of the university being at Saidpur, provides wonderful environment besides institutional infrastructure and culture. While comparing the data taken from UAP, the environmental aspect of UAP scores much lower than BAUST which appears to be very rational. Comparison of responses at BAUST and UAP are given in percentile form below. The Pearson Correlation coefficient of the dataset is +0.929 which is very close to +1, thus the finding of this question has a very strong positive linear relationship.

		Questions	UAP	BAUST
Question	A	Because of quality of education in BAUST	71%	51%
	B	Because of Proximity to my residence	7%	13%
	C	Because of environment at BAUST	10%	24%
	D	Because of parent's desire	5%	9%
	E	Because of hostel facility at BAUST	0%	2%
	F	None above	7%	2%

C. Question 3:

Q: Where from you got inspiration to get admission in BAUST?
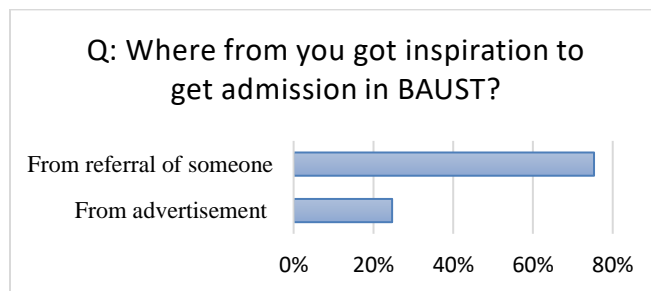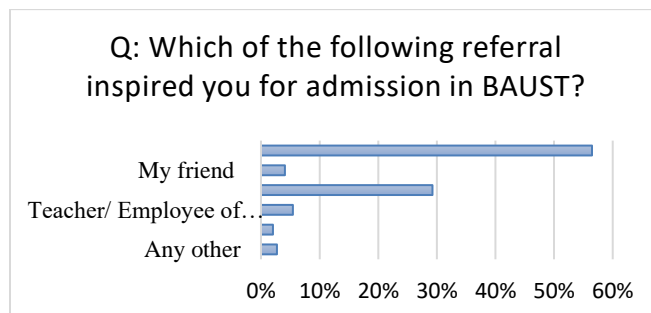
In general, perception of the people of Bangladesh is that advertisements are usually motive oriented and propagate messages which are much higher than rational. As such advertisements are usually less trusted. As such, word of mouth and referrals get higher preference over advertisements. The bar chart above clearly reveals that. Additionally, whatever stimulus advertisements create, decisions are often dependent on the referrals. The finding as above once compared with the UAP data, it is found to be almost similar. Comparison of responses at BAUST and UAP are given in percentile form below. The Pearson Correlation coefficient of the dataset is +0.999 which is very close to +1, thus the finding of this question has very strong positive linear relationship.

		Questions	UAP	BAUST
Question	A	From referral of someone	72%	75%
	B	From advertisement	28%	25%

D. Question 4:

Q: Which of the following referral inspired you for admission in BAUST?

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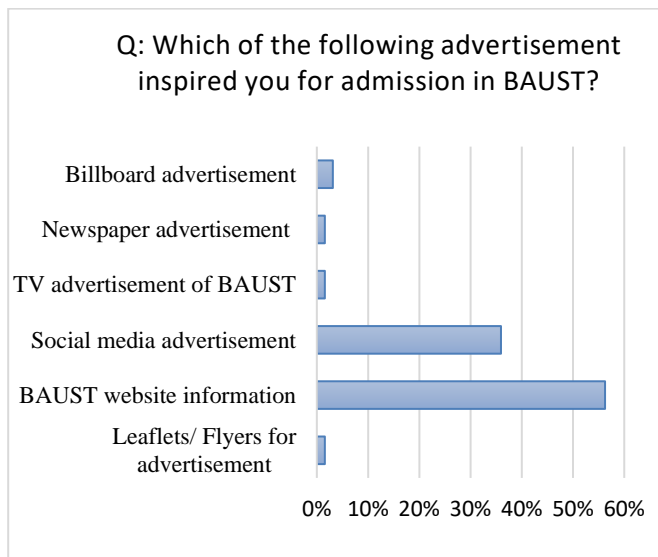
The bar chart above gives a very interesting finding that is directly related to Bangladesh culture. Children here are highly dependent to their parents and trust them most. This phenomenon is more dominant in peripheral districts like northern part of Bangladesh. Since the students of BAUST are mostly from northern part of Bangladesh, and the students of UAP are from all over Bangladesh, percentile data of UAP about referral from parents/ relatives is much lower than BAUST. Second most stimulus is from referral by students of BAUST. However, comparison of responses at BAUST and UAP are given in percentile form below that gives Pearson Correlation coefficient as +0.895 which is very close to +1, thus the findings of this question have very strong positive linear relationship.

	Questions		UAP	BAUST
Question	A	My parents/relatives	40%	56%
	B	My friend	13%	4%
	C	Student of BAUST	33%	29%
	D	Teacher/ Employee of BAUST	0%	5%
	E	None of the above	0%	2%
	F	Any other	15%	3%

E. Question 5:

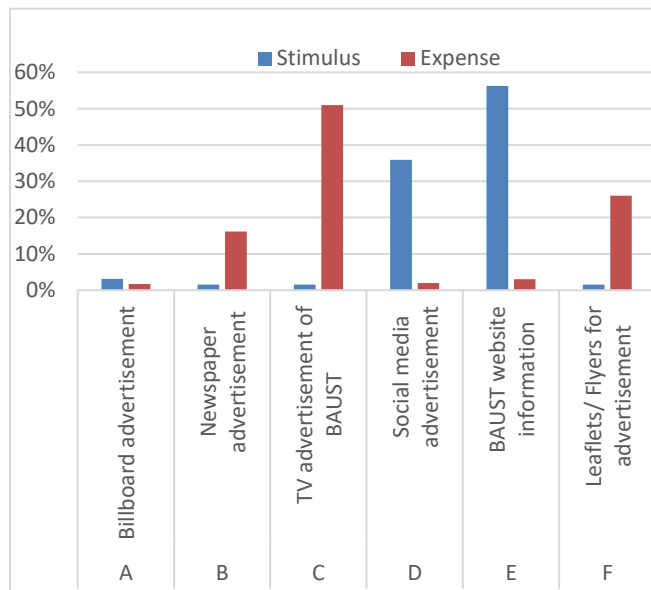
Q: Which of the following advertisement inspired you for admission in BAUST?

Previously it is seen that stimulus caused by advertisements influenced admission decision of 25% students (Q3). Out of which, the above bar chart shows that 56% were influenced by BAUST website information and 36% were influenced by Social Media Advertisements. That is to say (0.25x0.56) 14% were influenced by BAUST Website information and (0.25x0.36) 9% were influenced by Social Media Advertisements. Other advertisement efforts played insignificant role in admission decision. Comparison of responses at BAUST and UAP are given in percentile form below. The Pearson Correlation coefficient of the dataset is +0.950 which is very close to +1, thus the finding of this question has a very strong positive linear relationship.

	Questions	UAP	BAUST
Question	A	Billboard advertisement	5%	3%
	B	Newspaper advertisement	0%	2%
	C	TV advertisement of BAUST	0%	2%
	D	Social media advertisement	33%	36%
	E	BAUST website information	62%	56%
	F	Leaflets/ Flyers for advertisement	0%	2%

F. Expense and Stimulus Pattern

Usual pattern of expenses for advertisement in BAUST with a view to cause stimulus among students for admission are given below in percentile form along with the effects as found from the survey data. The above bar chart clearly states that there is great mismatch between stimulus caused by the effort and the expense incurred. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Stimulus and Expense is found to be -0.553. The negative sign indicates a negative correlation, and the magnitude of the value suggests a moderate strength of the correlation. This means that as stimulus expenses increase, the other variable tends to decrease, and vice versa. So, the result suggests that the expense pattern needs attention.

Table 1
Expense and Stimulus pattern of BAUST

	Fields of Expenses	Stimulus	Expense
A	Billboard advertisement	3%	5%
B	Newspaper advertisement	2%	10%
C	TV advertisement of BAUST	2%	40%

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D	Social media advertisement	36%	15%
E	BAUST website information	56%	10%
F	Leaflets/ Flyers for advertisement	2%	20%

5. CONCLUSION

The study on 'The Effective Stimulus for University Admission' is conducted with reference to BAUST and consistency of the result was checked through data collected from UAP. Although the focus of the study was BAUST activities, however finding of this study may be applicable for private universities in general.

The study is based on primary data collected through structured questionnaire survey conducted both physically and online. The size of the sample taken at BAUST was much larger than UAP since BAUST was the focus of the study. The sampling technique adopted was clustered convenience sampling.

Findings of this study show that education quality and the university environment act as the most important stimuli for admission decision. For that, referral and word of mouth are found to be much more effective than advertisements. Again, traditional methods of advertisement are found to be less effective than the new generation digital advertising mode. In addition to that, it is also found with reference to BAUST that, mental orientation of universities is yet not aligned with the current trend of advertisement effectiveness and thus incurring greater expenses to lesser effective media.

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