

CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHING THAI LANGUAGE TO RUSSIAN PEOPLE: A CASE STUDY OF PATTAYA LANGUAGE CENTER (PLC) IN CHONBURI

Nopadol Dejprasert^{1*}, Sophis Panprasong¹

¹*Graduate School of Commerce, Burapha University, Chon Buri 20131, Thailand*

ABSTRACT

The objectives of the research were to study to what extent 7 C's marketing mix perceived by Russian people were used for decision making to study Thai language at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi and the results were used as the guidelines for the school to improve and develop Thai Language curriculum to be consistent to Russian people studying at PLC Language School in Pattaya, Chonburi. Mixed method was used for the research. In other words, the study was both quantitative and qualitative research. The research focused on both Russian people's personal characteristics influencing the decision to study Thai language at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi and the 7C's marketing mix consisting of 1) customer value, 2) cost to customer, 3) convenience, 4) comfort, 5) communication, 6) caring, and 7) completion to respond the foreigners' need and to develop the Thai Language curriculum for Russian people at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi, all of which had an influence on the decision to study Thai language at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya region.

From the study of the satisfaction on the quality and facilities of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi, it was found that customers had high satisfaction on 1) the customer value, 2) cost to customer, 3) convenience, 4) comfort, 5) communication, 6) caring, 7) completion to respond foreigners' overall need. Therefore, the owner of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Chonburi should not only consistently and regularly maintain the standard the school already has, but he should also improve or add the qualities which the school lacks. The things the school needs to improve are as follows: the classrooms should be improved to have suitable atmosphere without noise interference; the drinking water should be clean and sufficient; the restrooms should be hygienic and should be cleaned regularly; sales promotion should be added in order to attract more interested service users and to impress the customers in order to make them repurchase in the future.

To develop the curriculum of Thai language for Russian people, the school owner should focus on maintaining the standard quality of the courses which can be measured, and the curriculum should be approved by the Ministry of Education. The instructors should give the techniques for the students to learn and practice doing tests and arrange other additional activities for each program in order to improve learning skills. In addition, the owner of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) should design many different schedules for the students to choose the day and time that would be convenient for them.

Keywords: Curriculum Improvement, Curriculum Development for teaching Thai Language, a Language

*Corresponding author: E-mail address: noppadon_dej@hotmail.com

Rationale

Human beings have used their native language as the tool for communication. In order to create good understanding and perception, rather than learning their own native language, they have to learn other languages too. Due to the fact that today is the era of information technology, the communication or the access to information can be done quickly, so learning another language is extremely important to help build up good mutual relations. Another language is a tool for communicating with each other and for social, cultural, and traditional understanding between the two nations.

Nowadays, Thai is one of the most popular languages that foreigners are interested in learning. Wiruch Wonpinunwattana (2005, p.2) stated that according to actual learning, Thai is one of the most popular languages that foreigners would like to learn. Based on the survey, it is found that there are around 114 institutes offering Thai language programs or Thai language curricula in Asia, Europe, America and Australia. For example, they offer programs of Asian studies or South East Asian studies. In addition, about 25 government and private tertiary institutes offer foreigners Thai programs or a variety of Thai studies whose contents are outstanding.

Tourism Authority of Thailand stated that the Russian market changed a lot. Seven years ago, fewer than 100,000 Russian tourists came to Thailand each year; however, nowadays the number of Russian tourists jumped to more than one million people and there was the potential for increasing tourists because Russia was a country which was one in four of economic superpower countries with economic strength in this era. This has been referred to as the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China). The people of these countries have been interested in tourism, especially health tourism which pushes Russian tourists to come to Thailand. This group of tourists has been the group of quality tourists. They stay in Thailand longer. Eight months ago, 780,337 Russians visited Thailand. The current number is

19.96% higher than that from the same period of the previous year. By the end of this year, the number of Russian tourists coming to Thailand would certainly reach 1.2 million. Therefore, Thailand would be the third frequently visited market for foreign tourists and this would surpass Japanese Market which grew up slowly at the same time. By October 2012 - March 2013, there were tourists travelling by a charter flight which flew directly from Russia. The number of the tourists also increases because over 1400-1500 tourists will come to Thailand from countries in the CIS.

In order to solve the above mentioned problems, the researcher has been interested in studying curriculum improvement and development for teaching Thai Language to Russian People at Pattaya Language Center (PLC), Chonburi. The researcher also believed that the study of the improvement and development of the curriculum of Thai language for foreigners would provide the information of the needs of foreigners coming to Thailand and this information could be used as the guidelines to develop the curriculum of Thai language schools in Pattaya and to satisfy the foreigners' need. It is believed that the findings would be useful for the development and the management to improve the educational institutes.

The objectives of the research

1. To study marketing mix viewed by customers that are used for decision making of Russians studying Thai at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi.
2. To use the results of the study to be guidelines to develop the curriculum and to provide the service of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi to satisfy the need of the foreigners who used the service from the language school in Pattaya.

The hypotheses of the quantitative research

Different personal characteristics of Russians have different effect on the satisfaction with the marketing mix viewed by different customers.

The conceptual framework of the quantitative research

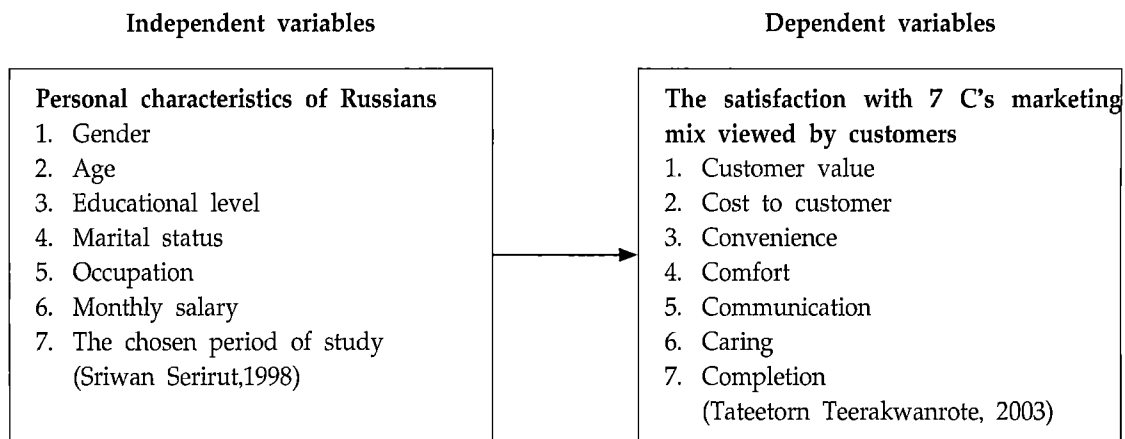


Figure 1 Framework of quantitative research

The conceptual framework of the quantitative research

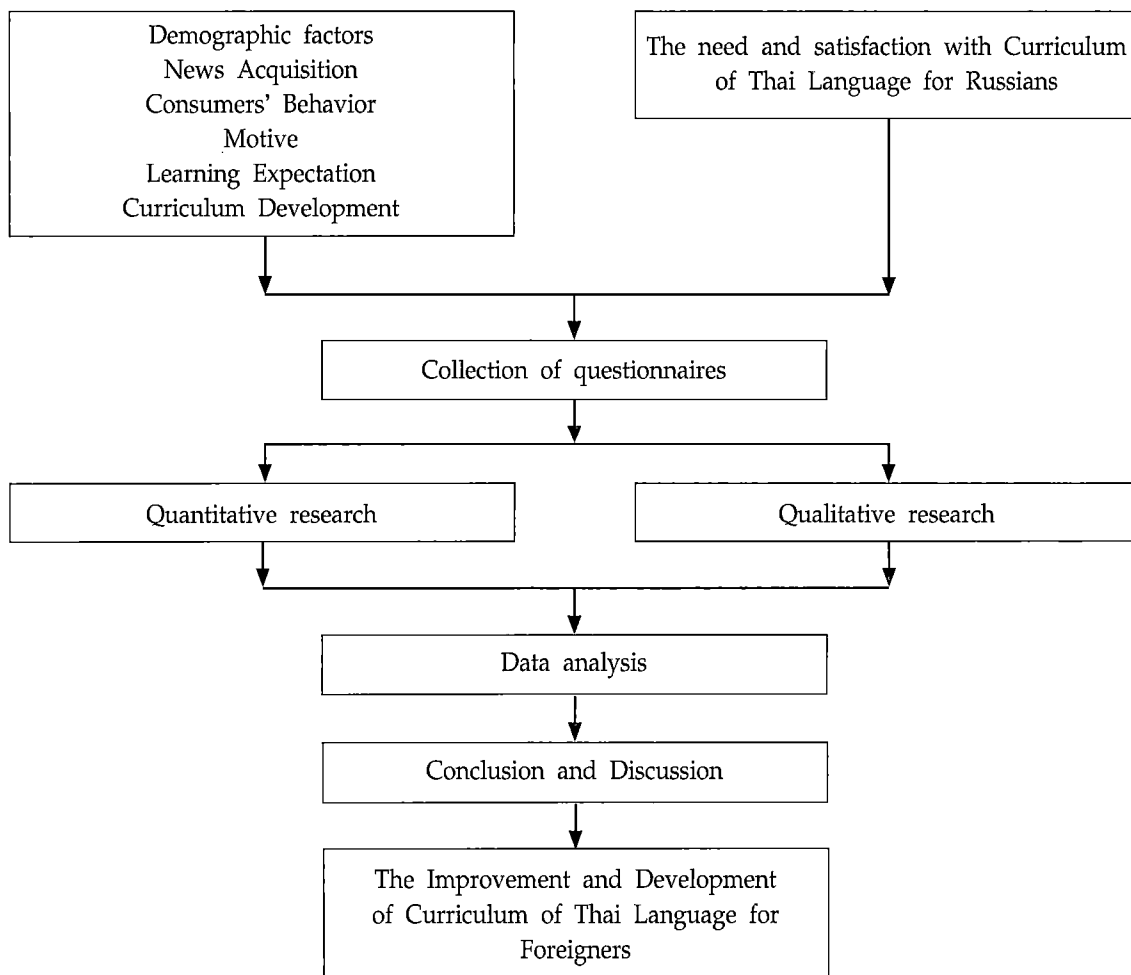


Figure 2 Framework of qualitative research

Concepts, theories and relevant researches

Personal characteristics

Siriwan Sereerat (1998, p. 85-86) stated that the buyers' decision would probably be affected by personal characteristics including age, family life cycle stage, occupation, economic circumstance, education, value, and lifestyle. It could be explained as follows:

1. Age: Age affects the customers' need for different products.
2. Family Life Cycle Stage: This is the procedure of person's life in a family and each stage of the life influences the needs, attitudes, individual's values resulting in product demand and different buying habits.
3. Occupation: Each person's occupation can lead to the different needs and demands for goods and services.
4. Economic Circumstances: Individuals' Economic Circumstances are the income which affects purchasing power and attitude about spending money.
5. Education: well- educated people are likely to buy better quality products than poorly-educated people.
6. Value: Value is the preference of the object, person or the idea; or it is the ratio of benefits the customers perceive towards the product price.
7. Lifestyle: Lifestyle is the life pattern of individuals which is shown by activities, interests, and opinions which agree with lifestyle; and it is important to explore the lifestyles of the target customers.

Marketing mix perceived by the customers (7C's)

Tateetorn Teerakwanrote (2003, p 81-82) stated that in order to manage business market successfully, the businessmen had to put many things into consideration.

1. Customer Value

Customer will choose the products or services which can satisfy their needs and they products or services should be worth the money spent. Therefore, the businesses should offer only the services that can really satisfy the customers.

2. Cost to Customer

The cost that the customers are willing to spend on the services should be worthwhile. When the customers are willing to pay for expensive

products, they certainly have high expectation on the services. Therefore, the cost for the services should be determined at the reasonable price.

3. Convenience

The customers choose the services that provide them convenience, such as giving them information of the products or the services. There will be problems if the customers found the keeping in touch with the services inconvenient. Businesses are responsible for providing convenient service to customers, so they should deliver the products or services at customers' home or office.

4. Communication

Customers want to get any useful news from the business. Meanwhile, customers also need to communicate with the business to ask for business information and give comments or complaints. Businesses must provide the target customers with the right medium which can provide information and receive comments from customers. The sales promotion will not be successful at all if the business fails in communications.

5. Caring

Customers who use the service need more attention and care from service providers.

6. Completion

Customers look forward to being responded completely from service providers.

7. Comfort

Atmosphere of the services including building, information desk, restrooms, passage, and different public signs must create comfort and peace for customers.

Methodology

The study of the curriculum improvement and development for Thai language teaching for Russians was a case study of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi. Mixed Method Research was used for the study. In other words, it was both quantitative and qualitative research. The sample of the study was divided into 2 groups. The first sample group consisted of 78 Russians who were studying Thai in Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi, and they had to fill out the

questionnaire. The second group consisted of 13 Russians having taken courses in Pattaya Language Center (PLC) for over 6 months, and they had to be interviewed.

Descriptive Statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation were used to analyze and explain the data of personal characteristics of foreigners and inferential statistics such as F-test and t-test were used to test the correlations between independent and dependent variables according to the set hypotheses based on the conceptual framework. When the differences were found, LSD was employed.

Conclusion

Conclusion of the Quantitative Research

In the study of the improvement and development of curriculum of Thai language for Russians, the researcher collected the data from 78 respondents. Then the data were analyzed through statistical method and the hypotheses were tested according to the objectives of the research. The sample was

recruited by purposive sampling. The sample was only Russian people studying in Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi. The sampling error was determined at 5 percent, and the analysis of the data can be summarized as follows.

The conclusion of the respondents' personal characteristics

The majority of the sample group consisted of female students (66.7 %). The age range most respondents belonged to was 21-30 years (42.3 %). To education level, the respondents had bachelor's degree (44.9 %). To marital status, 61.5 % of the respondents were single. To occupation, 48.7 % of the respondents were company employees. To average income, 52.6 % of the respondents had average monthly income of 20,001-40,000 baht. To period of the timetable, 44.9 % of the respondents chose the schedule on Friday afternoon.

The summary of the 7C's marketing mix perceived by the Russian customers studying at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi was shown by mean and standard deviation.

Table 1 The summary of the 7C's marketing mix perceived by the Russian customers studying at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi was shown by mean and standard deviation.

7C's marketing mix	\bar{X}	SD	Level	Rank
1. Customer Value	4.18	0.87	High	4
2. Cost to Customer	3.70	0.77	High	6
3. Convenience	3.64	1.01	High	7
4. Comfort	3.75	0.98	High	5
5. Communication	4.19	0.77	High	2
6. Caring	4.26	0.86	Highest	1
7. Completion	4.13	0.82	High	3
Sum	3.99	0.86	High	

From table 1, it was found that most of the Russian consumers studying at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi put an emphasis on 7C's marketing mix at the high level and its mean was 3.99. When each aspect was considered, it was

found that caring had the highest mean of 4.26, but convenience was perceived at the high level but it was the last one (3.64). Each aspect of the 7C's was classified as the above table.

Table 2 The significance level of 7 C's marketing mix perceived by Russian customers who had studied at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi and the marketing mix was classified as follows:

7 C's marketing mix	\bar{X}	SD	Level
Customer Value			
You agree that the school has famous teachers.	4.26	0.82	Highest
Cost to Customer			
You agree that the tuition fee for an hour was reasonable.	4.11	0.90	High
Convenience			
You agree that travelling to the school is convenient.	3.83	0.97	High
Comfort			
You agree that the school is spacious and has the lobby while you are using the service.	3.93	0.95	High
Communication			
You agree that the school have prepared the details of clear curricula and timetables in advance.	4.37	0.78	Highest
Caring			
You agree that the admission is easy, convenient and quick.	4.31	0.87	Highest
Completion			
The school measures the student's proficiency before studying.	4.27	0.81	Highest

From table 2, it was found that the respondents put an emphasis on customer value at the highest level. Having famous teachers was the most significant factor and its mean was 4.26. The customer cost was at the high level and the reasonable tuition fee per hour was the most significant, and its mean was 4.11. The convenience was at the high level, and the travelling to the school conveniently was perceived at the most significant, and its mean was 3.83. The comfort was at the high level. Spacious area and service for lobby was the most significant and its mean was 3.93. Communication was perceived at the highest level. The school's preparation for the

details of clear curricula and timetables in advance was the most significant, and its mean was 4.37. Caring was at the highest level. The respondents perceived quick, easy and convenient admission the most significant, and its mean was 4.31. Finally, the completion was at the highest level. The respondents perceived proficiency test before studying the highest significant, and its mean was 4.27.

The Result of the Hypotheses Testing

Different personal characteristics of Russians have different effect on the satisfaction with the marketing mix viewed by different customers.

Table 3 The Analysis of the Overall Satisfaction with 7 C'S Marketing Mix Viewed by Customers categorized by gender and marital status

Satisfaction with 7 C'S Marketing Mix Viewed by Customers	Gender	\bar{X}	SD	t	Sig.
Gender					
Overall	Male	3.94	0.67	-1.297	0.195
	Female	4.02	0.58		
Marital Status					
Overall	Single	3.94	0.66	-1.115	0.201
	Married	4.03	0.59		

From table 3, the results of the comparison of personal characteristics of the respondents categorized by gender and marital status were derived from Independent Sample t-test, it was found that Sig. (2-tailed) equaled 0.195 and 0.201

respectively. This meant that the respondents with different gender and marital status had no difference in the satisfaction with 7C's marketing mix at the statistical significance of 0.05.

Table 4 The Analysis of the Comparison of Overall Satisfaction with 7 C'S Marketing Mix Viewed by Customers categorized by age, educational level, occupation, income and the chosen time table.

Satisfaction with 7 C'S Marketing Mix Viewed by Customers	Sources of Variances	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age						
Overall	Between groups	2.21	4	0.78	1.478	0.247
	Within a group	191.47	74	0.56		
	Sum	194.57	77			
Educational level						
Overall	Between groups	2.86	4	0.98	1.786	0.321
	Within a group	181.84	74	0.67		
	Sum	184.54	77			
Occupation						
Overall	Between groups	2.86	4	0.79	1.578	0.236
	Within a group	182.58	74	0.83		
	Sum	185.44	77			
Income						
Overall	Between groups	5.79	4	1.76	3.817	0.336
	Within a group	189.35	74	0.46		
	Sum	199.54	77			
Chosen Period of Study						
Overall	Between groups	2.73	4	0.68	1.465	0.237
	Within a group	171.27	395	0.46		
	Sum	174.94	399			

From table 4, it is the results of the analysis of the comparison of customers categorized by age, educational level, occupation, income and the chosen time table using independent Sample t-test which showed that Sig. (2-tailed) equaled 0.247, 0.321,

0.236, 0.336, 0.237 respectively. This meant that respondent with different age, educational level, occupation, income and the chosen time table had no difference in the satisfaction with 7C's marketing mix at the statistical significance of 0.05.

Conclusion of the Qualitative Research

The research entitled *“Curriculum Improvement and Development for Teaching Thai Language to Russian People: A Case Study of a Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Chonburi”* was the guidelines to improve and develop the curriculum and service provision of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Pattaya, Chonburi so that it would be consistent with the needs of Russians who chose the service of the language school in Pattaya. The sample group consisted of 13 Russians recruited by purposive sampling and judgment sampling. Consequently, the researcher recruited only Russians who had studied at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) for over 6 months and in-depth-interview was administered to them. The results of the analysis were as follows:

1. The conclusion of personal characteristics of the interviewees

The sample group consisted of 7 female Russians and 6 male Russians. The age range was 24-47. Five of them were designers, and four of them ran their own business. The rest were a student, a lawyer, a housewife, and a programmer.

The conclusion of question 1: Generally, one of the reasons they chose PLC in Pattaya was that their friends suggested them, and they thought that it was a good school and the cost was the cheapest in Pattaya. In addition, it was near their house.

The conclusion of question 2: Generally, Russians' motivation to study Thai at Pattaya Language Center was to improve their speaking skill for their daily life. They want to speak, read and write Thai correctly. Moreover, they liked Thai culture.

The conclusion of question 3: Generally, the news exposure of Pattaya Language Center included words of mouth from their friends, publicity signs and Pattaya Language Center's website.

The conclusion of question 4: Generally, Russian students expected that they could speak and communicate with Thai people after learning Thai from Pattaya Language Center because they wanted to travel or live in Thailand.

The conclusion of question 5: Generally, Russians students were satisfied or impressed by Thai teachers who had a good technique to make the lessons

easy to understand. Moreover, they had a chance to meet classmates from different countries and the tuition fee was not expensive.

The conclusion of question 6: Generally, to the contents of the lesson, the interviewees thought that the interesting and suitable contents made the lessons easy to understand. However, they wanted the school to add more contents concerning Thai history and culture.

Overall teaching methods were good and the contents were easy to understand. However, the school should put an emphasis on listening, reading, speaking and writing skills.

For overall teaching materials, the school should continuously update the teaching materials in computers and videos.

The conclusion of question 7: Generally, for the improvement and development of the curriculum of Thai language teaching, the interviewees suggested that the time for each lesson be fewer than 1-5 hours per day. There should also be more practice on conversation. Moreover, the school should update computers and learning materials.

2. The guidelines for curriculum improvement and development and the service provision of Pattaya Language Center (PLC)

To Thai language curriculum improvement and development for Russian people, the school owner should focus on the issue of maintaining the quality standards which can be measured. The curriculum should be approved by the Ministry of Education. The school should give students tips to learn and practice doing tests and add more activities for other skills. In addition, the Institute should arrange different schedules which the students could choose the day and time that suited each group of students. Moreover, the teaching materials should be continuously updated.

Discussion

From the study, the results of the study revealed to what extent 7 C's marketing mix perceived by customers could differently affect Russian people's decision making to study Thai at Pattaya Language Center. The results gave the entrepreneurs

or relevant businesses data for developing the curriculum that could satisfy the students' needs. It was also the guideline for entrepreneurs' benefits to develop their curriculum. The consumers also had better choices. It was also the model to develop other types of organization. The results of the study were consistent with the results of the study of Chanissara Apaiburi (2008). In her study entitled *"The Product Strategy Related to the Decision to Study at A Tutorial School for University Entrance Exams in Muang District, Chonburi"*, it was found that the factors which influenced the decision to choose a tutorial school consisted of 1) the school's location and 2) the tutors. The results were used for the development of the tutorial school because the decision to choose the tutorial school depended on the tutors and the school's location. The results of the study were also consistent with Kongkiat Boonserm's research (2009) entitled *"Factors Affecting the Decision Making in Attending Private Tutoring Lessons of Lower Secondary School Students : a Multiple Discriminant Analysis and Support Vector Machine"* which found that income which was the students' external factor combined with parents' decision making had low correlation with attending tutoring lessons. This revealed that economic and social status of the parents or family and family's supporting factor were important. This meant that if the family had high income level, they could support the cost. Another factor that the parents of students had higher education, the students decided to attend the tutorial class with support from parents. For marketing mix, it was found that the marketing mix was perceived at that high level. However, there was the difference in each aspect. From the results of the study, the researcher found that the respondent primarily put an emphasis on personnel. Next, the emphasis was on price, promotion, products or services, physical appearance, service process and the service channel respectively. In addition, this study found that caring factor affected service users in deciding to study at Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in Chonburi at the highest level. This was consistent with the concept of marketing mix of Chalongsri Pimonsompong

(2006, page 50). He said care was considered a product, but it was an intangible product. It was an abstract which included comfort, pleasure, giving opinions, and counseling. The service should have the same quality of the product. However, quality of service consisted of a combination of several factors, including knowledge, skills and experience of staff, modernization of equipment, the rapid and continuous process of service delivery, the beauty of the buildings, including hospitality of all staff.

The Research Suggestions

The results of the study showed which marketing factors that had an effect on the decision making and the satisfaction of Russian people. The results of the study were useful for any entrepreneurs of language institute teaching Thai for foreigners, so the entrepreneurs should use them as the guidelines for marketing plan to improve and develop any Thai language institutes to be standard and be able to satisfy the customers' needs. In addition, the results were basic data for people interested in investing in Thai language institute for foreigners. The conclusions were summarized as follows:

- 1) 7 C's marketing mix was factor Russian people used for making decision to study at Pattaya Language Center (PLC). The findings also revealed that customers' satisfaction on the services and facilities of PLC. The customers were satisfied with the marketing mix received which consisted of 1) customer value, 2) cost to customer, 3) convenience, 4) comfort, 5) communication, 6) caring, and completion. Therefore, the entrepreneurs should improve these factors. The good things that the school had should be maintained continuously. There were things that the school should improve. For example, the classrooms should have suitable atmosphere with no noise interference. For drinking water, it should be clean and sufficient. For the restrooms, they should be hygienic and should be cleaned regularly. For sales promotion, it should be added in order to attract more interested service users and to impress the customers to repurchase in the future.
- 2) For the guidelines of curriculum improvement and development of Pattaya Language Center (PLC) in

Pattaya, Chonburi, the improvement and development should be consistent with the Russian people's needs. It should put an emphasis on maintaining the standard of the curriculum which should be measured, and the language school should be approved by the Ministry of Education. The school should give the students advice for the techniques to learn and to do the tests. The school should arrange additional activities to promote other skills. In addition, the Thai language institute should design the timetables that the students can choose at their convenience.

The Suggestions for Further Studies

1. This study collected data from a sample of 78 people from only an institute, which was one of the most famous and popular Thai language institutions. In fact, various factors were considered satisfactory in this institute, so the results of the study were rather good. Therefore, in the next studies the researchers should collect the information from different language institutes scattering throughout the country in order to contribute to a better understanding.
2. The collected data from the sample in this study may not be enough, and the period of data collection was quite short. For the next studies, there should be more considerations on the appropriateness and feasibility to collect data which will have a direct impact on the data analysis.
3. For further studies, there should be the study of various problems the user experience so that the owners of Thai Language Institute will bring the existing problems to solve for better service which can meet the customers' needs.

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