

Factors Influencing the Decision to Study for a Bachelor's Degree in the Music Program, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to study the factors that are important to the decision to study for a bachelor's degree in music of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University students. A questionnaire was created using Google Form and distributed to students by distributing it in the LINE group of all music students. A total of 76 questionnaires were received, representing 100 percent of the total number of questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. In conclusion, the majority of the sample were male (76.32%), 19 years old (72.37%), living in the central region, having (42.11%) a high school diploma (90.79%), a GPA of 2.51-3.00 (47.37%), graduating from a government school (81.58%), choosing to study as a major instrument, electric guitar (36.84%), and having a family occupation as a private company employee (31.58%), and having an average income of 10,001 - 20,000 baht (51.32%). They learned about the recruitment news from the guidance activities the most (43.42%). The results of the research found that the factors that influenced the decision to study for a bachelor's degree were generally at a high level. Including confidence in the cost of education and personal factors, average (4.69), university location (4.58), university image (4.56) and curriculum (4.54). The results of the study concluded that opinions on factors influencing the decision to study at the bachelor's degree level, Faculty of Science and Technology, when classified by gender, age, place of residence, parent's occupation, family income, and decision to study at the bachelor's degree level in Western music, major in music, of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University students.

Keywords: Enrollment Decision, Music Program, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

Introduction

Education is undergoing rapid and continuous development amidst the current changes in the educational world. The COVID-19 pandemic continued causing the education system to change abruptly. Many universities switch to online learning at home across the country. Education urgently needs to constantly develop and change, whether it initiates the change itself or is forced to change. COVID-19 served as an unavoidable compulsory driver. Therefore, effective online teaching is a key solution that allows everyone to study continuously. One aspect of education, such as the integration of technology and teaching approaches, is discussed by Kallayane Phetcharaporn (2564, p. 1), who mentions the current state where technology plays a significant role in education. Managing learning for students in the 21st century is something that teachers must be highly aware of. This is due to the rapid changes in global situations and advancements in science and technology, which create many new bodies of knowledge that affect the learning and way of life of students. Therefore, teachers must be prepared to organize learning to prepare students with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and skills for life in the 21st century.

This aligns with the concept of teaching techniques (Tassana Khammanee, 2562, cited in Jiranun Tosin, 2565, p. 3), which states that teaching techniques are various methods used in the teaching and

learning process, teaching steps, teaching methods, or instructional procedures to help make teaching high-quality and efficient. This is considered a critical component of the factors influencing students' choice of higher education. Currently, Thailand has numerous higher education institutions, including government, private, and governmental higher education institutions under the Ministry of Education that offer graduate-level instruction. Thus, it can be said that graduate programs are offered nationwide, significantly expanding educational opportunities for the public. Consequently, this has led to educational competition. Each institution uses various strategies to enroll students to meet their goals and admission plans and also provides more opportunities and choices for learners (Thanayakon Chuaythukpuean, 2557, cited in Subaisa Chamnonglak, 2564, p. 2).

This aligns with Sompol Kaewtaen (2559, p. 90), where universities in Thailand offer many undergraduate programs across various disciplines. Music discipline is one field that has been included as a major in higher education. Generally, it is organized into various major areas such as Music Skills major, Thai Music major, International Music major, etc. Currently, the International Music major is becoming more popular among students. This is evident from the fact that both public and private universities have expanded their offerings as the International Music major.

Choosing to study music at the undergraduate level is a significant academic and professional endeavor that requires dedication, ability, and passion. Individuals who choose to embark on this educational journey often do so out of a deep love for music, coupled with career inspiration in this field. However, the decision to study music further is not solely driven by passion; it is only one component in the decision-making process for enrolling in the music discipline of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

Therefore, it is necessary to find strategies to attract students to pursue undergraduate studies at the university. Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University organizes various activities and public relations efforts, such as participating in curriculum market projects, organizing mobile guidance activities, or providing information via the website and many other channels. These efforts are designed to introduce Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University to prospective students, increasing their interest in deciding to pursue further studies.

The decision to study music at the undergraduate level is a significant and complex one. Numerous factors influence an individual's decision. Here, we will explore and analyze the factors that influence the decision to study music at the undergraduate level, particularly from the perspective of economic and social development, which are core components influencing the decision to enroll in higher education. This is consistent with the 20-Year National Strategy (2018 – 2037 BE), which is Thailand's first national strategy under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Its vision is for "Thailand to be a secure, prosperous, and sustainable developed country through development based on the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy". The goal is to create good, capable, and high-quality Thai people, ready for life in the 21st century, within a societal environment that facilitates and supports lifelong self-development. This includes having the competitive ability to elevate the country's potential across various dimensions, based on the concepts of "Extending the Past," "Adjusting the Present," and "Creating New Value in the Future," to develop and strengthen human resource potential in all dimensions and at all stages of life (Royal Gazette, 2561, p. 1).

The decision to pursue an undergraduate degree in music involves several key factors that influence students' intention and choice of this field. Interest and preference in music are significant factors influencing students' decision to choose music studies. Students who have an interest and preference in music can show greater dedication in studying and working in music careers. Furthermore, musical skills and abilities, such as playing musical instruments, singing, songwriting, etc., are factors that influence students' confidence in choosing to study music.

Having clear goals and intentions for furthering education in music aligns with Phanrawee Wongwattananantanusorn (2565, p. 83), who states that the theory emphasizing the relationship between goals and actions is called the Achievement Goal. An achievement goal is a reachable objective, such as

the desire to be a professional musician, studying to develop musical skills, or studying at a reputable institution in the music industry. Support from family and society, as stated by Srisunthorn Sukthaworn and Kittisak Angkahanavin (2564, p. 206), suggests that family influences the decision to pursue further education. Factors like family size, family finances, and the occupation, education, and religion of residing members are important to the decision. In the decision of students to choose to study music, besides family, students opting for higher education must also consider career opportunities and the continuation of education in the music field, which provides opportunities to work in the music industry, education to prepare for a career in music, or education to launch oneself into the music industry.

This provides guidance in supporting students' decisions regarding undergraduate enrollment. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study entitled "Factors Influencing the Decision to Study for a Bachelor's Degree in the Music Program, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University." The study investigated the factors influencing students' decisions to enroll in the Music Program at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, for the 2024 academic year. Five major factors were examined: personal factors, curriculum factors, institutional factors, educational cost factors, and social factors. Using a survey research design, quantitative data were collected from all newly enrolled students in the Music Program. The findings were intended to provide empirical evidence for curriculum planning, educational management, and student recruitment strategies. Furthermore, the results offer valuable insights for improving public relations, enhancing curriculum development, and aligning teaching practices with the needs and expectations of prospective students. Ultimately, the study aims to strengthen the university's ability to attract and support future students pursuing undergraduate studies in music

Literature review

The research study aims to investigate various factors that affect students' decisions regarding continuing their studies in the field of music at the higher education level. The researcher consulted relevant documents, textbooks, journals, and research, both domestic and international, alongside related theories. This review serves as the foundation for explaining key concepts and establishing the research's conceptual framework.

Achievement Motivation is a vital concept describing the internal energy that stimulates an individual toward success in their endeavors. Many scholars share similar interpretations. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2010) explain that Achievement Motivation is an internal need that drives a person to attempt to succeed at a task. Pornpan Normueang (2564) and Kirati Papat (2560) link this motivation to perseverance, determination, and responsibility toward challenging goals. These qualities collectively help individuals maintain resilience and persist against obstacles to achieve successful outcomes.

McClelland (1985) further elaborates that individuals with high Achievement Motivation typically set goals that are difficult yet attainable, strive to compete with themselves, and systematically evaluate their performance. This concept is highly relevant to music students, who require perseverance, tolerance for the difficulties inherent in training and practice, and determination to continuously improve their performance techniques. Therefore, Achievement Motivation is a key driver ensuring students remain committed and do not abandon their musical goals.

Scholars have offered various definitions for the concept of Decision Making. Simon (1960) views decision-making as the process of selecting the best available alternative to achieve a stated objective. Griffiths (1959) defines it as selecting a course of action from different options to produce the most appropriate result. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015) add that decision-making is an internal psychological process that includes perception, learning, attitude formation, and outcome evaluation before a choice is made. Consequently, decision-making is not merely a sudden choice but a systematic and careful process of thinking. Especially when choosing higher education, students must contemplate multiple factors, including their own interest, aptitude, readiness, and family expectations, all of which influence their future life path.

In studying the decision to pursue further education, researchers found that “interest and passion in music” are crucial motivations driving students toward music programs (Dika & D’Amico, 2016). Those passionate about music often want to deepen their skills and learn from experts at reputable institutions (Nathiphat Wachirachaikiat, 2552). Furthermore, musical ability is another influential factor, as students with a solid musical foundation and good skills generally feel more confident about continuing their education (Hannon & Schutz, 2010; Bowmer et al., 2018).

Herbert Simon (1960) proposed that decision-making is a continuous cycle: recognizing a problem, creating alternatives, selecting a course of action, and evaluating the results. This theory applies well to the selection of continued studies. Students proceed by considering their own needs, researching information about music institutions, and comparing curricula and reputations before choosing an institution that aligns with their goals and expectations.

Beyond personal motivation, the “reputation of the institution” is a significant external factor influencing this decision, particularly in music. Students frequently assess the expertise of the faculty/lecturers, the quality of the curriculum, performance opportunities, and a learning environment conducive to development (Lebler, 2007; Ballantyne & Packer, 2009). The institution’s reputation thus serves as a proxy for “academic reliability,” instilling confidence in both the student and their family during the selection process.

Another key factor is “family expectation,” which strongly influences the student's decision. This factor is grounded in the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020) and Vroom’s VIE Theory (1964). These theories posit that an individual’s decision relies on assessing the “expectation of success” (Expectancy), the “belief that success will lead to desired rewards” (Instrumentality), and the “value given to that outcome” (Valence).

Families who are supportive and understanding of a music career path encourage their children to pursue what they love. Conversely, if a family perceives a music career as unstable or lacking a future, this can become a significant obstacle to the student’s choice.

Supporting research reinforces these concepts. Hannon and Schutz (2010) found that musical ability influences the confidence required to choose music studies. Creech and colleagues (2008) reported that musical experiences starting in childhood correlate with the inclination to choose music studies later. Lebler (2007) highlighted the importance of a supportive learning environment and institutional systems in inspiring students to continue their studies. Moreover, Ballantyne and Packer (2009) found that cultural attitudes and the value society places on music directly impact on the decision to pursue higher education in this field, include internal factors such as Achievement Motivation, interest, ability, and passion for music, as well as external factors like the institution's reputation, the learning environment, and family expectations. These factors are all interrelated and collectively affect the student’s decision-making process when selecting music studies at the higher education level.

Research objective

To study factors that influence the decision to pursue undergraduate studies in Western music. Music major among students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

Expected benefits

1. Understand the factors influencing the decision to pursue undergraduate studies at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for the 2024 academic year.
2. Use the research findings to inform administrators' decision-making, building strengths for the university in the future and enhancing its competitiveness against other higher education institutions.
3. Gain guidelines for developing and improving public relations to reach the target audience.

Research methodology

This study explored the key factors influencing students' decisions to enroll in the undergraduate Music Program at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, during the 2024 academic year. The year 2024 was selected because it represents the most recent cohort of newly enrolled students at the time of data collection and reflects current trends and conditions affecting students' higher education choices. Recognizing that enrollment decisions are shaped by a complex interaction of personal, social, economic, and institutional factors, the study sought to identify the aspects that most strongly influenced students' decisions to pursue music studies at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

The population consisted of all newly enrolled undergraduate students in the Music Program at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, for the 2024 academic year. A total of 76 students participated in the study, representing the entire population of first-year students enrolled in the program. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered online using Google Forms. All questionnaires were returned and completed, resulting in a response rate of 100 percent.

The questionnaire was designed to examine five dimensions that may influence students' enrollment decisions: personal factors, curriculum factors, institutional factors, educational cost factors, and social factors. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to identify the relative importance of each factor influencing students' decisions to study in the Music Program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

The demographic composition of the cohort reveals that most incoming students are male (76.3%), while females account for 23.7%. Most students are 19 years old (72.4%), indicating that they have recently completed their secondary education. Geographically, the student body is largely concentrated in Central Thailand (42.1%) and the Bangkok metropolitan area (36.8%), with smaller representations from the eastern (7.9%), northern (6.6%), southern (3.9%), and northeastern (2.6%) regions.

This distribution suggests that proximity to Bangkok and central regions plays a role in students' accessibility to the university and may contribute to their enrollment decisions.

An overwhelming majority of students (90.8%) graduated from high school (M.6), while only 9.2% came from vocational certificate programs. Regarding prior academic achievement, the largest group of students reported a GPA between 2.51 and 3.00 (47.4%), followed by those between 3.01 and 3.50 (30.3%). Smaller groups achieved between 2.00–2.50 (19.7%) and 3.51–4.00 (2.6%).

Most students graduated from public or government schools (81.6%), while private school graduates represented 18.4%. This finding reflects the accessibility and appeal of the program to students from the public education system, where tuition affordability and exposure to university guidance activities are often greater.

The choice of instrument among students highlights interesting trends in musical preference. Electric guitar is the most popular primary instrument, chosen by 36.8% of respondents, followed by voice (25%), drum kit (13.2%), and woodwind instruments (7.9%). Other less common majors include piano (5.3%), bass (3.9%), Thai music (3.9%), brass instruments (2.6%), and classical guitar (1.3%).

The prominence of electric guitar and voice reflects both contemporary musical trends and the growing demand for performance-based programs that bridge classical and popular styles.

Family background analysis reveals that 46% of students come from families where the guardian works in private companies, while 31.6% are from government or state enterprise households. Smaller proportions are business owners (11.8%), freelancers (6.6%), or engaged in other occupations (3.9%).

In terms of household income, more than half of the students (51.3%) reported a monthly guardian income between 10,001–20,000 THB, while another 42.1% fall within the 20,001–30,000 THB range. Only a small number of families reported incomes above 30,000 THB or below 10,000 THB. These statistics suggest that affordability and cost efficiency are likely strong influences in students' university choice, a point further reinforced by later findings

The most significant channels through which students learned about the Music Program were educational guidance activities (43.4%) and recommendations from acquaintances or seniors (25%). Digital platforms such as websites and social media contributed 18.4%, while print media and television accounted for 10.5%. A small remainder (2.6%) came from other sources.

This indicates that direct engagement through school outreach programs and peer recommendations remain the most effective recruitment tools. Although online platforms play a notable role, traditional and relational forms of communication still dominate in influencing student decisions for this particular field of study.

Findings

Key factors influencing enrollment decision

The research grouped influential elements into five major categories: 1) Cost of Education 2) Personal Factors 3) University Location 4) University Image 5) Curriculum. Although all five categories were rated at the “Highest” level of importance, their relative rankings reveal the nuances of students’ decision-making processes.

1. Cost of Education (Mean = 4.69)

The cost of education emerged as one of the two most influential factors in enrollment decisions, tying with personal factors at the top rank. Students placed great importance on affordability, availability of scholarships, and reasonable living expenses associated with studying at the university.

Specifically, students highly valued that: 1) Tuition fees are reasonable and affordable (Mean 4.61) 2) The university provides educational scholarships (Mean 4.57) 3) Additional costs beyond tuition are not high compared to other institutions (Mean 4.55)

Given the moderate-income levels of most families, this finding underscores the critical role that financial accessibility plays in widening participation in arts education.

2. Personal Factors (Mean = 4.69)

Personal considerations and family influences also held significant sway. Many students were encouraged to enroll due to familial connections or the perceived alignment of the curriculum with personal goals.

Notable sub-factors include: 1) The student’s guardian graduated from the same university (Mean 4.76) 2) The curriculum and major match personal interests (Mean 4.69) 3) Parental or guardian recommendation (Mean 4.68) 4) The university’s popularity among friends (Mean 4.63)

This data highlights the cultural importance of family legacy and social influence in Thai higher education decision-making. Students often view universities through a lens of trust and familiarity, which reinforces enrollment continuity across generations.

3. University Location and Facilities (Mean = 4.68)

The physical environment and accessibility of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University were also rated as major decision-making elements. Its location in central Bangkok provides convenience, safety, and urban amenities while maintaining a pleasant and green campus atmosphere.

Students particularly valued: 1) Modern equipment and teaching materials (Mean 4.78) 2) Convenient travel and transportation (Mean 4.74) 3) Clean and pleasant campus environment (Mean 4.72) 4) Availability of amenities and facilities (Mean 4.70)

This suggests that the university’s commitment to maintaining modern infrastructure and learning resources resonates strongly with prospective students, especially those interested in music, where access to high-quality instruments and technology is essential.

4. University Image (Mean = 4.59)

Institutional reputation and public perception were also important components of the decision-making process. Students expressed confidence in the university’s credibility, alumni achievements, and organizational systems.

The most influential sub-factors were: 1) Confidence in the university's reputation (Mean 4.63) 2) Recognition of alumni in the music field (Mean 4.61) 3) Trust in university management systems (Mean 4.58) 4) Frequent positive public activities that enhance institutional image (Mean 4.53)

Such findings indicate that consistent branding, visibility, and community engagement contribute meaningfully to a university's attractiveness, particularly for creative arts disciplines that rely on skill development and reputation-building.

5. Curriculum (Mean = 4.63)

Although the curriculum ranked fifth overall, it was still rated at the highest level of importance. The Music Program's structure, modernity, and career relevance are perceived as strong motivators for enrollment.

Students emphasized that: 1) The curriculum meets the needs of future careers (Mean 4.70) 2) The curriculum is popular among peers (Mean 4.67) 3) It offers a variety of subjects and specialization options (Mean 4.64) 4) It is modern and aligned with current musical trends (Mean 4.53)

This reflects that while financial and personal considerations may drive the initial decision, academic relevance and perceived employability remain critical to students' confidence in their chosen program.

When ranking the five main categories, both Cost of Education and Personal Factors share the top position, followed closely by University Location, University Image, and Curriculum.

Table 1. Overall Assessment of Influential Factors (ranks the five primary factors based on their average importance score.)

Rank	Factor	Mean	SD
1 (tie)	Cost of Education	4.69	0.50
1 (tie)	Personal Factors	4.69	0.50
3	University Location	4.58	0.55
4	University Image	4.56	0.61
5	Curriculum	4.54	0.60
Overall Average		4.56	0.61

Finally, students expressed an extremely high level of satisfaction and conviction in their choice to enroll at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The mean score for the overall decision to enroll in the Music Program was 4.69, with a standard deviation of 0.53, indicating strong agreement and confidence among respondents. This outcome suggests that despite financial and external influences, students are generally content with their decision and perceive high value in the program's offerings.

Conclusions and Discussion

Conclusions

In summary, the study found that the decision to enroll in the Music Program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University is influenced primarily by the cost of education, personal and familial factors, and the university's location and facilities. While university image and curriculum design also contribute meaningfully, affordability, accessibility, and personal trust remain the dominant themes driving student choice. These insights highlight opportunities for the university to further enhance its recruitment strategies as follows:

- 1) Continuing to offer financial support and scholarships
- 2) Strengthening educational guidance outreach

- 3) Promoting the modern facilities and successful alumni network
- 4) Ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant to evolving musical careers.

Overall, the findings reinforce Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University's position as a trusted, accessible, and modern choice for aspiring musicians—one that effectively balances academic rigor, practical affordability, and personal connection in attracting the next generation of Thai music students.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that student enrollment decisions are driven by an intersection of economic feasibility, personal connections, and institutional reputation, rather than by any single determinant.

The dual prominence of Cost of Education and Personal Factors suggests that practical financial considerations coexist with emotional and familial motivations. Many students choose universities that are not only affordable but also trusted within their family or social circles.

Furthermore, the appeal of the university's location and modern facilities reflects a growing expectation among young musicians for technologically equipped learning environments. In a field like music—where practice, recording, and performance facilities directly affect educational quality—students' emphasis on infrastructure underscores the importance of continual investment in resources.

The curriculum and university image, though ranked slightly lower, still achieved the highest importance level overall, confirming that these elements are essential in reinforcing students' long-term confidence in their education and career paths. The recognition of alumni's success and the curriculum's relevance to modern music careers both play crucial roles in shaping the institution's identity and attractiveness.

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