

CONTRACT CHEATING MARKETING IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Contract cheating was originally defined in 2006 (Clarke and Lancaster, 2006), but despite its long history, contract cheating in the non-English language speaking world is not a topic that has been widely considered in the academic integrity literature. This research presentation (and associated paper), developed alongside an undergraduate student partner with personal experience of Thailand, examines how contract cheating occurs from the Thailand perspective. Academic misconduct appears to be more of a culturally accepted practice in Thailand than in many other countries. The problem of plagiarism and cheating was largely brought to the attention of Thai audiences in 2017 through the release of the successful film 'Bad Genius', which showed an elaborate cheating scheme used in standardised exams. A 2013 conference panel discussing the use of ghost writers to produce college applications for Thai students was covered in the local media (Thepbamrung & Arterbury, 2014). Studies conducted by Khathayut et al (2020) and Puengpipattrakul (2016) agree that there is a shortfall in Thai undergraduates' understanding of what plagiarism encompasses and they lack the tools to avoid it. But contract cheating, as a specific method of academic misconduct, has not been previously studied in the Thai context.

This session will explore how the contract cheating industry in Thailand operates, where investigation shows that companies mainly provide assignments in the Thai language, but many also provide assignments in English and some provide these in Mandarin. Like many other countries, the contract cheating industry

markets its services through websites, but also through social media, with many transactions brokered through messaging apps. Illustrative examples of the marketing used in Thailand will be shown at the conference. These share many trends with contract cheating provider marketing used elsewhere in the world, including social media promotion through Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

The investigation sees a range of assignment types available for purchase by Thai students, with essays, reports, proposals and dissertations amongst the services popularly advertised. High school and secondary school students are catered for through the offering of homework services. A 1,000 word Thai essay required in 7 days is typically priced at between \$80 and \$140 (United States Dollars), a higher price point than has been found in many studies looking at pricing for English language essays.

As well as discussing the range of contract cheating activity happening in Thailand, the presentation will also explore how students are encouraged to buy from them, applying a modified version of the persuasiveness framework developed by Rowland et al (2018). This framework had previously been applied to consider contract cheating in English. Due to the prolific use of social media in contract cheating marketing in Thailand, the framework is also applied in this context. The results show websites in Thailand surpassing social media for informativeness, but Facebook in particular scoring highly for both credibility and involvement compared to other social media and web platforms. Contract cheating providers

in Thailand appear well placed to persuade students to buy from them.

This session will provide further insights into contract cheating in Thailand. It will also

demonstrate the need for awareness raising relating to contract cheating to continue outside the English speaking world.

References

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