Singapore varsities learn to seize value in ads

They are ramping up marketing efforts to compete for education pie

**BY JOYCE HOOI & RACHEL CHANG**

**COMPETITION** between Singapore's three universities is certainly hotting up if the degree of TV and print advertising is anything to go by.

The once-stodgy academic institutions are showing a facility for slick imagery, eye-catching slogans and lavish productions as they battle not just each other but the increasing number of foreign tertiary outlets for the education dollar.

Singapore Management University (SMU) set the pace with advertisements featuring acrobatic students leaping up with backflips and handstands; Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) have responded by ramping up their marketing.

NUS Business School is capitalising on its venerable reputation and decades of existence, stressing its "classic" and "timeless" qualities through the image of that enduring fashion icon, a pair of jeans.

The ads and the tagline — Some things never go out of style. Like a BBA from NUS Business School — ran on TV and bus shelters along the routes to junior colleges and polytechnics this month.

The deputy director of NUS' Office of Admissions, Mr R. Rajaram, acknowledged "the need to dispense more funds for advertisements" as the tertiary sector diversifies.

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SMU has realigned its budget, focusing on only one or two media vehicles like print instead of spreading the message across a wide spectrum.

said a spokesman, of the "changing education landscape and need to brand ourselves".

NTU recently organised roadshows in Orchard Road and even threw a party at Zouk so prospective students could interact with the institution's faculty members.

But NTU has not quite made the grade yet, according to Ms Suzanne Seah, 18, who has applied to all three universities.

Ms Seah, a former Catholic Junior College student who completed her A levels last year, gave SMU a thumbs up for the aggressive marketing of its city campus but thought that the NTU ads were practically "nowhere to be seen".