Varsities adopt marketing approach to recruitment

THE A-level results are due out today, but the three local universities have already spent tens of thousands on advertising campaigns to draw students.

In stark contrast to former no-frills application proceedings, this year, marketing strategies include talks at five-star hotels, outdoor concerts and even pre-entry undergraduate courses.

With autonomy status, the funding that universities receive from the Ministry of Education is mainly determined by student numbers. There is also increased competition in the sector from private institutes.

"The world is not just divided between NUS and NTU, we have to work now to attract every single student," said Assoc Prof Tan Thiam Soon, dean of the Office of Admissions at the National University of Singapore.

Director Alan Goh of the Office of Admissions at the Singapore Management University (SMU) said: "The old model in which you sit back like a retailer is long gone. Today, you need to take a marketing approach to recruitment."

SMU treats its potential students to career talks at five-star hotels. Projecting a hip image, it also dishes out free Zouk party passes, holds concerts in the park and arranges tea sessions at the Equinox restaurant where students can get a panoramic view of their new city campus.

The university also targets National Service men in sessions with deans and faculty members.

NTU has signed agreements with the top five junior colleges so students can take undergraduate courses and accumulate credits before they enter the university.

Overseas universities are also vying for a share of the education pie. Universities from the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia will hold education fairs here while alumni members from top American universities will host dinners to entice potential students. — Channel NewsAsia