ANALYSIS OF ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING OPTIMIZATION STRATEGY OF YUNNAN VOCATIONAL COLLEGE OF ECONOMICS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Zongmei Li  
Titanan Sun  
Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand

This research takes the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs as the research object, and conduct in-depth study in combination with the current development trend of private education and the specific reality of the school. The background, meaning, writing methods and ideas of the topic selection are expounded in detail in the introductory part, and then the relevant theories of marketing are analyzed as well as the macro- and micro- environment faced by the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs. The recruitment and marketing concept of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs are also summarized in this article. PEST and SWOT analysis are used to analyze the career of the Yunnan Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs. The article also looks into the political environment, economic environment, social environment, and scientific environment in which the college is located, as well as the advantages, disadvantages, opportunities and challenges it faces, and the usage of relevant marketing strategies, such as market segmentation, market positioning, and selection of target markets, etc. Finally, it studies the college’s admissions marketing strategy, and puts forward a series of solutions to promote the optimization of the college's marketing strategy.

Keywords: marketing strategy; target marketing; private colleges and universities

Zongmei Li  
MBA, Graduate School, Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand  
Research interests: marketing strategy, target marketing  
E-mail: 1191281273@qq.com

Titanan Sun  
PhD in Management, Siam Global Innovation Academy, Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand  
Research Interests: marketing strategy, target marketing
Introduction

Research background
With the deepening of reforms and openness, the development of the market economy, and the progress of society, education has increasingly highlighted its irreplaceable role and contribution in all dimensions of society. As an important part of higher education, private education is an effective supplement to China's education system and content, and has an indispensable impact on the development of China's higher education (Mo, 2018).

The market-oriented development model of China's private higher education shows distinct characteristics: it is oriented by market demand and centered on admissions.

However, as the total population of the appropriate age continues to decline, the effective source of students for higher education also decreases, but the number of higher education institutions is increasing. Under the influence of multiple subjective and objective factors such as many problems in the development of colleges and universities themselves, the market space of private colleges and universities is constantly shrinking, and development resistance is formed.

With the increasing competition in the higher education market and changing consumer market demands, more and more scholars and education managers in China have realized the importance and necessity of introducing marketing theories and methods into the field of higher education.

Research purposes
This article mainly discusses ways to improve the quality of education and level of students by exploring the recruitment and marketing strategies of JW College, and promote its internationalization, high-class and personalized development, so as to make better contributions to our country's education.

Thus, it also provides a more theoretical basis and intellectual support for the vast number of private higher vocational colleges in China.

Literature review

"4P" Marketing Theory
The concept of "marketing mix" was proposed by American scholar Neil Borden in 1953. When enterprises provide products or services, they should effectively combine marketing elements and marketing variables to fully meet market demands and maximize profits.

Based on his research, Neil Borden put forward the famous 4P theory, which summarizes the elements of marketing mix into product (Product), price (Price), channel (Place) and promotion (Promotion). And Yao & Li (2011) further clarified the marketing mix method with 4P as the core.

The 4P theory is the basic theory of marketing.
This theory first established the basic framework of marketing, focusing on product orientation to meet market demand as the goal. It is the core and content of marketing theory, which greatly promotes the emergence and development of new theories, and it also has the initial value and the most core guiding significance for the marketing of enterprises.
Differentiated Marketing Theory

Philip Kotler (2017) believes that differentiation covers four aspects, namely: product differentiation, service differentiation, marketing channel differentiation, and image differentiation. The core of differentiated marketing is that enterprises gain an advantage in competition by creating products and brand images that are different from those of their competitors.

He (2014) placed two or more sub-markets for special research, and determined the sales measures of its own positioning according to the characteristics of each sub-market, its own product characteristics and good services.

Research methodology

Literature analysis

Based on the earlier works on admissions and marketing strategies of private higher vocational colleges, this article clarifies the concept of admissions and marketing in private higher vocational colleges, clarifies the relationship between various links in admissions and marketing, and finds how to solve the arising problems. Thoughts and methods help to form understanding of the problem of the admissions marketing strategy, and to form the approach to the analysis and selection of admission marketing strategy of private higher vocational colleges.

Field research method

Through on-site observation of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs, including regional environment, teaching facilities, training bases, accommodation environment, campus planning, surrounding construction, etc., we can find the reasons for the difficulties in recruiting students from the school itself.

Through on-site research on the characteristic areas formed in the development planning of the region in recent years, combined with the economic development and the settlement of enterprises in the region, the professional setting in school admissions, school-enterprise cooperation, and practical training are put forward.

Survey method

The survey is carried out by means of questionnaires, and the questionnaire data is collected as comprehensively, accurately and meticulously as possible. Three freshmen from the Yunnan Economic and Trade and Foreign Affairs Vocational College designed questionnaires for three grades of 2019, 2020 and 2021.

School teachers and student leaders conducted questionnaire surveys to understand the needs of candidates, to find out the problems existing in the recruitment publicity work, and offer appropriate solutions and suggestions.

Empirical Results

Analyze the results of interviews with teachers from the Admissions Office: regarding the admissions situation, 19 teachers stated that the admissions problem is very serious.
According to this year's admissions data, it is far below expectations, although most tasks have been completed through the later expansion of admissions but fell down from the point of view of the educational level of students.

Only one teacher said that the competitiveness of private vocational colleges is inherently weak, and the college's characteristic school-running strength needs to be consolidated.

It is reasonable to have such an admissions result. In the analysis of the reasons for the low competitiveness of admissions and how to improve the competitiveness of admissions, all 20 teachers showed great enthusiasm, expressed their opinions, and provided many ideas. Please see the table below for details (Tab. 1).

Table 1 – Results of teachers survey
(compiled by co-authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admissions Questions</th>
<th>The small number of students inhibits the source of students</th>
<th>The uneven educational level of students affects the source of students</th>
<th>The school’s characteristic majors reduce the loss of students</th>
<th>High school fees and loss of students</th>
<th>Schools are fiercely competitive and miss out on students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the main reasons for admissions difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause Analysis</th>
<th>low social acceptance</th>
<th>Insufficient government funding</th>
<th>Prejudice against private colleges</th>
<th>Unaffordable tuition fees</th>
<th>specialties and lack of attraction</th>
<th>Admissions promotion is not in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main countermeasures and suggestions for the admissions dilemma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Change the society's understanding of private vocational education</th>
<th>Improve school strength</th>
<th>Do a good job in job security</th>
<th>Pay attention to publicity</th>
<th>Tuition Differential Adjustment</th>
<th>Strengthen campus cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyze the results of the interviews with the parents of the students: China's education concept has been formed for a long time, and those who can go to undergraduate will never consider a junior college. 20 parents said that if their children can be admitted to the undergraduate schools, but even a bad undergraduate school will not accept them.

Children go to a vocational school. If it is not possible to choose an undergraduate school then majors will be considered, and preference will be given to public colleges or private colleges with good employment prospects.
ANALYSIS OF ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING OPTIMIZATION

Only 2 of 20 parents expressed their willingness to send their children to private vocational colleges, citing the good environment and flexibility of the school. The remaining 18 parents gave their reasons for not wanting their children to go to the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Trade. The statistics are in Tab. 2.

**Table 2 – Results of parents survey**
(Compiled by co-authors)

*The main reasons why parents do not choose the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Trade*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason not to choose</th>
<th>Because the school is a private school</th>
<th>The school is not well known</th>
<th>Not finding a job after graduation</th>
<th>School fees are expensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyze the interview results of the graduates: with the goal of being admitted to an undergraduate school, a major will be considered only if the undergraduate degree is not accepted. Half of the students said they would follow the advice of teachers and parents when choosing a school.

Among 50 students, 5 expressed their willingness to choose the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs when choosing a career, and 4 said they would consider it. The specific interview results are in Tab.3.

**Table 3 – Results of students survey**
(Compiled by co-authors)

*The main reasons why college entrance examination graduates do not choose Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for not choosing</th>
<th>Other schools recommended by teachers and parents</th>
<th>Choose a school where your classmates and friends go to</th>
<th>No major you want to study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentioned</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussions**

**Attach importance to the construction of educational products**

(1) Market-oriented formation of characteristic majors

On the basis of the existing advantages of 2 high-level majors and 5 provincial-level majors recognized by the Ministry of Education, we can try to concentrate resources and energy to continue to create some advantageous majors and shape the school education brand. To actively cultivate advantageous majors, establish a good reputation, and expand social popularity and influence, it is necessary for the college to operate the professional characteristics lastingly and stably learning, so that the students prepared by the school can make change society for the better (Xia, 2017).
(2) Optimizing vocational training programs and curricula systems

In particular, a variety of specific strategies can be adopted. First, it is important to strengthen the professional characteristics. Through the regulation and control of the admission plan, the number of students studying in the major is balanced, and the needs of students who can change majors in the school are met, and the focus is on improving the quality and building the direction of the advantageous professional group.

Second, it is necessary to adjust and optimize the structure of disciplines and majors and the curriculum system.

Based on the positioning of an application-oriented university, the training programs of various majors of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs can actively carry out the reform of talent training programs according to social needs, focus on application practice and enhance innovation and entrepreneurship capabilities, and highlight job categories and practical ability needs.

For the majors which market demand is shrinking day by day, we will delete and integrate them in a timely manner, and introduce new majors in new market demand, so as to improve the professional structure and layout, enhance the connotation construction of the college, and build a distinctive major application technology talent training system of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Trade.

Third, it is also important to strengthen the introduction of new majors, and vigorously promote new majors that are still in the investment period and growth period, such as medical beauty technology, drone application technology, artificial intelligence technology application, and virtual reality technology application. It is important to use its own advantages to refine and form a professional advantage to distance oneself from competitors and win the favor and recognition of students and parents.

(3) Strengthen school-enterprise cooperation and strengthen school practical teaching

The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs, as an application-oriented private college, should train students with strong theoretical and practical ability and practical ability. Through cooperation with enterprises, enterprises can participate in the development of students' abilities. In the opinion of scholars (Liu, 2018), it can not only strengthen the connection between the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs and enterprises, provide more employment opportunities for students, but also shorten the distance between students and enterprises, go deep into enterprise practice, and learn without vain.

The college should try to strengthen the practice system to create the college's characteristic professional advantages. The integration of production and education, school-enterprise cooperation, "apprenticeship", "work-study alternation" and other modes of study, individual teaching practice guidance consistent with corporate positions, strengthen professional and practical ability, and provide additional modules for students' individual development.

*Improve the price strategy of differentiated charging*

(1) Differential fees for different majors

In recent years, the number of private colleges and universities has gradually increased, the competition in the admissions market has become increasingly fierce, and the opening of charging autonomy has led to a growing gap between private colleges and public colleges. The increase in fees directly affects the competitiveness of private colleges and universities.
It is suggested that tuition pricing should follow the average affordability of consumers, and determine the charging standard that most people can accept. At the same time, the policy should be carefully interpreted, and after full research on the market, the actual development of the school to formulate a reasonable price increase mechanism should be integrated.

The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs has initially implemented differentiated pricing strategies in different majors. According to the nature of the majors studied, the tuition fees are also different. The specific tuition fees are: electromechanical sports and management majors and new energy vehicle technology majors; health management majors in nursing, stomatology technology, and medical imaging technology; economics and trade accounting majors; education majors in preschool education; engineering.

The annual tuition fee for the above major categories is 11,800 yuan, and the annual tuition for other majors is 10,800 yuan.

(2) Establish a subsidy incentive policy that matches the fees

The establishment of scholarships will help stimulate the enthusiasm of students to apply for the exam and the initiative of learning. The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs can learn from the experience of other colleges and universities to attract high-quality students through scholarships. Although the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs also has a scholarship policy, compared with public colleges, there is still a certain gap in the scholarship policy, and the school-level scholarship does not play a sufficient role in motivating students.

Through a flexible and diverse mechanism, the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs refers to the good practices of domestic and foreign institutions to absorb higher-quality students. At the same time, it rewards students with good learning, good morals and strong practical ability, and increases and optimizes the types of scholarships.

On the basis of the existing three-good students, outstanding personnel, outstanding graduates, etc., in response to the "mass innovation, entrepreneurship" environment, the innovation and entrepreneurship award has been added, which is beneficial to raising college students' awareness of innovation, entrepreneurship and talents.

It is necessary to keep up with the times and appropriately increase the amount of scholarships, so as to enhance the attractiveness of scholarships, further distinguish the gradient difference between national scholarships and school-level scholarships, and help to play the stimulating and guiding role of scholarships.

**Build a stable and diversified recruitment channel**

(1) Establish a stable high school contact system

Admission channels are an important part of the admission and marketing strategy of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs. In today's economic informatization and globalization, stable channels are still irreplaceable for the services provided by the service agencies of enterprises.

By summarizing and sorting the sources of students who study, establish and improve the high school admission source base, analyzing which high school candidates are the main source of freshmen of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Trade, and awarding "Yunnan Economic and Trade Vocational College" to senior high schools with better quality and quantity of students. The title of "Quality Student Source Base of Foreign
Affairs Vocational College", and corresponding incentive funds will be issued. Admissions and publicity staff from various cities should go to high schools, and to middle schools where the students come from, they have a stable contact system to communicate with the head teacher and the just teachers to publicize the information about the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs.

There are some advantages from regular communication with high school students and parents, and select excellent teachers such as carrying out pre-exam psychological counseling, free mathematics, physics and chemistry training, college entrance examination, English composition training and other mutual aid activities through educational marketing methods.

(2) Optimizing the marketing and service functions of online channels

With the popularization and application of the Internet and mobile Internet, online channels have become one of the important ways for candidates and parents to contact and understand target institutions (Wang, 2018).

Advertising has the advantages of a wide audience and timely updates. The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Trade can optimize the marketing and service functions of network channels from the following aspects:

1) further improve the homepage of the campus website of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Trade, update campus news and trends in a timely manner, enrich the content of the web page, and make it as comprehensive as possible, show to the society the achievements of Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs;

2) improve the function of the admissions module of the official website of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs, set up forums to answer questions online, inquire about filing information and admissions information, etc., and timely feedback on the information about the college to students and parents;

3) actively embed college admissions link advertisements on other portal websites, new media or related admissions information publishing websites during the admissions season;

4) establish an effective online and offline interaction mechanism, carry out live admissions broadcasts, and improve the service function of online information. For publicly released information such as admissions contacts, administrative unit contact numbers, admissions office consultation phone numbers, QQ groups, etc., it is necessary to make overall planning, clarify the responsible persons and formulate standardized training content.

(3) Strengthen the optimization strategy of publicity methods

The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs admission marketing is mainly achieved through brand awareness and advertising on and off the Internet. For online publicity, in addition to the regular Weibo, WeChat, Station B, campus network, and Baidu Tieba, you can also take advantage of the popularity of this year's "Douyin" and "Kuishou" short videos.

Young people prefer to browse Douyin and watch small videos with Kuaishou. If the academy uses such means for publicity, it can achieve very good results. It can let the outstanding student representatives of the school or the students who won the innovation and entrepreneurship competition go to high schools and technical secondary schools in the prefecture to give lectures, telling about their experience of studying in school and how to win awards, so that more students or parents can understand the education of the college.

The visible academic results attract more people to the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs. In addition, this way students and parents can visit the
school on-site, conduct face-to-face communication and reception, etc. to achieve the purpose of marketing.

**Good public relations**

(1) Do a good job in the management of internal public relations

The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs is an application-oriented private college. Compared with public colleges, private colleges generally face the disadvantages of low social status and low recognition in Chinese society. Therefore, the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs should handle social and public relations well and coordinate all aspects in the long-term education and running of schools. Public relations are inseparable from a certain public relations strategy. In order to succeed in public relations, not only the dedicated public relations department and public relations personnel should continue to exert their efforts, but also the full cooperation of all personnel within the organization help to achieve the ultimate goal through multi-party efforts. The Yunnan The Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs has established a good social image. To do a good job in management of the public relations of the whole staff, the senior leaders must establish public relations awareness and the cooperation of all staff in public relations.

(2) Manage external public relations well

First, strengthen ties with government departments. With the improvement of economic level, the government and the public pay more and more attention to education. Private colleges and universities should actively communicate with government departments and educational authorities in the course of their development, understand the latest education policies, and actively undertake social responsibilities.

For example, the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs can take the initiative to undertake various grade examinations organized by government departments: national and enterprise campus recruitment examinations; relevant ability improvement training for government or enterprise staff; actively undertake social welfare activities organized by government departments, etc., strengthen ties with government agencies, contribute to social progress and harmonious development, and continuously strengthen private colleges and universities to serve the society.

Second, strengthen contact and communication with social media. Actively communicate with major local media and the Internet media such as Sina, Tencent, Baidu, etc., to promote the recent development of the school, the deeds of outstanding students, and various activities organized by the school, such as students participating in local epidemic volunteers during holidays.

Several social media provided valuable materials for publicity, such as college students' teaching support, vacation social practice team, and targeted poverty alleviation team's social practice, which also objectively increased the exposure of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs, which is conducive to enhancing the Yunnan's career in economics, trade and foreign affairs.

The social influence of the college has established a good reputation. Lastly, strengthen connections with graduates. Now both foreign and domestic colleges and universities pay more and more attention to the work of alumni in the development of the school.
The Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs can strengthen the relationship with graduates by establishing alumni associations, organizing alumni activities, and issuing alumni cards.

On the other hand, it can also use the strength of the majority of alumni to expand the popularity and influence of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics, Trade and Foreign Affairs, and provide assistance for the recruitment and marketing of the Yunnan Vocational College of Economics and Foreign Affairs.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

In view of the basic judgment that the future development of private colleges and universities must go to the market, the education provided by private colleges in the future should provide selective education compared with public colleges. Since it is to provide selective education, it must go "high-class", internationalization, and personalization" development strategy, followed by matching its admission marketing strategy. The specific suggestions are as follows:

1. The use of full admission means, through the school examination of art media, establish effective student source bases that can directly contact students or their parents in each admission state, and strive to achieve a precise student source locking strategy before admission;
2. Vigorously employ or invite internationally renowned experts, scholars and even politicians with international influence to serve as consultants, specially-appointed professors, and foreign tutors to rapidly improve the school's standard and make the school's selective education high-class;
3. The introduction of internationalized programs such as overseas upgrade-oriented training programs and overseas micro-study programs has greatly increased the opportunities for students to connect with international standards;
4. Based on the formulation of a student-centered individualized talent training program, realize the individualized needs of students in selective education.

**References:**


*Paper submitted* 08 December 2022
*Paper accepted for publishing* 15 March 2023
*Paper published online* 30 July 2023