

STUDY ON MARKETING STRATEGIES OF GRADUATE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION TRAINING BUSINESS - TAKING NEW ORIENTAL ONLINE JINAN BRANCH AS AN EXAMPLE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study were : 1) To analyze the current situation of postgraduate entrance examination training at New Oriental Online Jinan Branch by SWOT analysis; 2) To improve the marketing strategy of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch's postgraduate entrance examination training business through 4P theory. This paper is based on the 4P marketing mix theory and adopts a quantitative research method to conduct a questionnaire survey on 300 students both inside and outside the Jinan branch of New Oriental Online. Then, the 4P marketing theory is sorted out and an interview outline is written. Through analysis, this paper **finds that:** 1) New Oriental Online Jinan Branch's brand influence is insufficient and industry competition is becoming increasingly fierce; 2) We need to further enrich and optimize the courses and pricing system related to postgraduate entrance examination training at New Oriental Online Jinan Branch, improve marketing strategies, and expand marketing channels to meet the training needs of various postgraduate students and promote the efficient development of the company.

Keywords: New Oriental's postgraduate entrance examination training business; 4P; marketing strategy

Introduction

Throughout the years, China's emphasis on education has gradually increased, and the overall level of education popularization in China is increasing. More students are entering universities to receive undergraduate and even graduate education. In recent years, the number of college graduates has

continued to increase, and the pressure of employment competition has become greater (Cao,2017). With the rapid development of China's economic construction, various industries have varying degrees of internal competition, and the demand for highly educated talents is even greater than before (Chen,2020). Therefore, taking the postgraduate entrance examination to enhance one's education, enhance one's competitiveness, and obtain better employment opportunities and development has become a better solution for many students.

Due to multiple factors such as higher personal development requirements from candidates, greater employment pressure from graduates, inclusion of part-time graduate students in the unified examination, expansion of graduate enrollment, and the pandemic, the number of applicants for the graduate entrance examination has risen sharply (Fan,2011). The number of applicants in 2019 was close to 3 million; In 2022, the number of registrations reached 4.57 million, doubling from 2017; The number of applicants in both 2023 and 2024 was around 4.5 million (Han,2018). The proportion of former graduates taking the postgraduate entrance exam in World War II and III is gradually increasing among the population applying for graduate studies, and the difficulty of the exam is gradually increasing. In this context, more and more candidates choose to enhance their own strength through postgraduate entrance examination training, striving to stand out in fierce competition (Long,2020). As a result, there is a demand for large-scale training, and the postgraduate entrance examination training market is showing a thriving trend. Many postgraduate entrance examination institutions have emerged in an explosive manner, running and entering the field, hoping to get a share of this huge profit cake.

New Oriental Education Group is an educational service institution that started with IELTS and TOEFL exam training. Established in 2005, it has gradually developed into a comprehensive enterprise group in the postgraduate entrance examination education service industry (Tian,2021). It adopts a nationwide direct operation and management approach, establishes a teaching and research institute, and independently researches and develops teaching content; Vigorously cultivate full-time teachers and provide differentiated training for different majors. Multiple campuses, including New Oriental Online Jinan Branch, have set up training bases near universities and set up courses such as day reading, closed training, and online training to meet the training

needs of different postgraduate entrance examination groups(Zhou & Zhou,2022). With the hot trend of taking the postgraduate entrance examination, the company has gained excellent development opportunities and provided a considerable share of the company's profit growth. Jinan Branch was established in 2010, and its business projects include multiple business training programs such as postgraduate entrance exams and adult exams (Xu,2020b). The postgraduate entrance examination training business of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch has achieved certain achievements in the past development, but there have also been many problems such as insufficient targeted promotion, poor marketing conversion rate, uneven teaching quality, and complaints (Min,2017). Although New Oriental Online Jinan Branch provides postgraduate entrance examination training to all universities in Shandong Province, there is still room for improvement in recruiting candidates from different majors and mentoring new students with the help of the elderly. This paper will take the recruitment of different majors in the postgraduate entrance examination training business of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch as the starting point, analyze and identify optimization plans based on current marketing strategies and future development directions.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the current situation of postgraduate entrance examination training at New Oriental Online Jinan Branch by SWOT analysis.
2. To improve the marketing strategy of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch's postgraduate entrance examination training business through 4P theory.

Literature Reviews

This chapter elaborates on the definition of marketing and summarizes the views of the former in marketing strategy related research, a detailed introduction to the 4P marketing theory, and the SWOT theory, providing a theoretical basis for the analysis of the current situation of New Oriental's marketing strategy in the following text. New Oriental Online Jinan Branch was established in 2010 and is directly managed by New Oriental Online of Beijing headquarters. Its business projects include vocational education, postgraduate entrance examination and training, and adult exams. The postgraduate entrance examination training program was established in 2010, and after 13 years of

development, it has evolved from a team of 5 people to a team of nearly 100 people. The annual enrollment, revenue, and net profit have steadily increased, ranking in the middle and top among the 30 provinces with campuses in China(Chen & Zhang,2018). The Jinan branch has established offline teaching campuses in all cities with universities in Shandong Province, such as Qingdao, Weifang, Dongying, Tai'an, and Linyi. It has also opened multiple campuses in popular cities such as Jinan and Qingdao, and has implemented class teaching in all campuses, greatly facilitating the postgraduate entrance examination students in nearby schools(Chu,2020). The branch relies on the Teaching and Research Institute of the Beijing headquarters to establish the Shandong Provincial Teaching and Research Institute.

Definition of marketing strategy: Marketing strategy is a planned organization of various business activities by enterprises based on customer needs as the starting point, obtaining information on customer demand and purchasing power based on experience, and the expectations of the business community. It is a series of measurable and controllable activities aimed at improving sales and manufacturer reputation for a certain target market(David,2006). It is a combination of various marketing methods such as product, price, channel, promotion, and strategy.

4P Marketing Theory: This paper is mainly based on the classic marketing combination strategy 4P, summarized by Professor Jerome McCarthy of Michigan State University in his book "Basic Marketing", which includes Product strategy, Price strategy, Place strategy, and Promotion strategy. The 4P marketing mix strategy provides a relatively mature marketing direction for enterprise marketing and management, guiding the enterprise on what products to provide to the market, at what prices, through what promotional methods, and on which channels to sell(Deng,2020). A product is an operational item or service created to meet market consumer demand, primarily used for use and consumption. As the first step for manufacturers and operators to participate in marketing, product strategy is the most important aspect of the marketing process. The functionality and appearance of a product are the main factors that attract consumers to purchase, with parts being the most important.

In terms of products, with the development of the economy, the improvement of consumer attitudes and consumption levels, and the increasing emphasis on product appearance, product packaging plays an increasingly

important role in marketing(Chen,2021). Among them, Jianting and Feng discussed product packaging. In recent years, the function of product packaging as a means of protecting and accommodating products has become increasingly weak, and the sales function under exquisite packaging has become more prominent .

Price refers to the cost of a product determined by its value and supply-demand relationship during the sales process in the market, which affects demand, sales, and profit growth(Gu,2020). Reasonable product pricing should refer to market positioning, brand effect, consumer group, etc. The formulation of pricing strategies should consider two factors: first, the penetration strategy of high and low prices in the enterprise market; second, corresponding pricing plans should be formulated based on specific product types and marketing environments, such as discounts, psychology, geography, and other pricing strategies. Places can be divided into direct channels and indirect channels. Direct channels refer to enterprises bypassing intermediate links and selling products directly to consumers through telephone, self built stores, or platforms. Indirect channels refer to intermediaries serving as the medium for selling goods, and the sales terminals are also consumers(Hu & Zhang,2020). This sales method is currently the main marketing channel for products, which can accelerate the circulation of goods more quickly. The choice of sales channels will significantly affect consumer purchasing tendencies.

Promotion is the exchange of information between enterprises and users, attracting consumers to purchase products through various means of information dissemination. The purpose of promotion is to utilize the curiosity and conformity of consumers to increase their desire to purchase. Promotions can bring benefits to consumers and enhance their preference for the brand. Advertising, promotion, and public promotion are all promotional methods(Simon & Stark,2022). Economic principles indicate that people will respond to incentives. A high-quality promotional strategy can stimulate consumers' potential purchasing desire, accelerate product quantity sales, and achieve ultimate monetization. Therefore, promotion is an incentive measure for producers or businesses to purchase products from consumers.

Product strategy - Enterprises market tangible or intangible products based on the needs of consumers in the target market, including the width, length, depth, and relevance of product combinations, and combine and use

them. In this paper, the research subject is the postgraduate entrance examination training business, and therefore the product is New Oriental Online Jinan Branch(Wang,2020). In order to meet the needs of potential candidates in the target market, including but not limited to teaching time, teaching format, and class capacity, it provides potential candidates with the required postgraduate entrance examination training courses and ensures the quality of courses and supporting services during the training period, thereby helping students achieve ideal results in the postgraduate entrance examination and ultimately obtain the postgraduate entrance examination.

Price strategy - Enterprises can adopt demand oriented pricing, cost oriented pricing, or competition oriented pricing based on the needs of consumers in the target market, in order to achieve their marketing goals and generate revenue(Yang & Cao,2019). In this paper, the pricing strategy for the postgraduate entrance examination training business of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch is to provide the training fees required for potential interested students with courses.

Place (Channel Strategy) - The execution of a company's marketing strategy cannot be separated from efficient channel strategies. Opening up channels to enhance brand awareness, influence, and recognition is highly effective(Han,2021). Multiple channels should be used simultaneously to attract better customers for the postgraduate entrance examination training business, thereby increasing enrollment conversion rate, market share, and enhancing brand influence.

Promotion strategy - such as advertising, personnel promotion, lectures, book fairs, public relations, etc., to encourage potential interested students to purchase products or services, so that the company can achieve the expected benefits(Carayannis & Walter,2015). Applied to the postgraduate entrance examination training business of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch, there are mainly promotional strategies such as group purchase discounts, gift of learning materials, discounts for old and new students or red envelope rewards for old students, and agreement guarantees for full or partial refunds.

SWOT analysis theory: The SWOT analysis method was initially applied in the field of management to provide decision-making methods for the operation and development of enterprises, and has since been widely applied in

multiple fields. In SWOT analysis, the four letters represent different meanings: S (strengths) is an advantage, W (weaknesses) is a disadvantage, O (opportunities) is an opportunity, T (threats) is a threat, S and W are internal factors, and O and T are external factors. In a sense, analytical method is an internal analysis method of a company, which is based on the information of the company itself. For the SWOT analysis method, it can integrate the internal environment with the external environment based on actual conditions and related conditions, and construct its unique and high-level balance analysis system based on actual conditions. In addition, SWOT performs more prominently and clearly in terms of structured features, with the SWOT matrix being its typical and main manifestation (Chen & Li, 2019). For this matrix, it mainly consists of four parts. For each part, it has its own exclusive meaning and value, and in terms of specific content, the main focus is on structure, conducting in-depth analysis of the external environment of the enterprise, and conducting diversified and extensive analysis of its internal resources.

1. Analysis of strengths and weaknesses (SW). Due to the fact that the enterprise is a whole and the wide range of sources of competitive advantage, it is necessary to conduct a detailed comparison between the enterprise and its competitors at each link of the entire value chain when conducting a strengths and weaknesses analysis. Such as whether the product is novel, whether the marketing process is complex, whether the sales channels are smooth, and whether the price is competitive (Nuseir & El Refae, 2022). If an enterprise's advantages in one or several aspects are the key success factors that the industry should possess, then the comprehensive competitive advantage of the enterprise may be stronger. It should be pointed out that measuring whether a company and its products have a competitive advantage can only be done from the perspective of existing potential users, rather than from the perspective of the company.

2. Opportunity and Threat Analysis (OT), such as the current vicious competition threat in society: Adverse competition limits the highest price of a company's products, and substitutes not only pose a threat to the company, but may also bring opportunities. Enterprises must analyze whether substitutes bring a catastrophic disaster to their products or services, or provide higher profits or value; The transfer cost for buyers to purchase substitutes; What measures can companies take to reduce costs or increase added value to reduce the risk of consumers purchasing pirated alternatives.

3. Overall analysis. Overall, SWOT can be divided into two parts: the first part is SW, mainly used to analyze internal conditions; The second part is OT, mainly used to analyze external conditions. By using this method, we can identify factors that are beneficial and worth promoting, as well as things that are unfavorable and should be avoided (Xu, 2020a). We can identify existing problems, find solutions, and clarify our future development direction. Based on this analysis, problems can be classified according to their importance and urgency, clarifying which are urgent problems to solve, which can be slightly delayed, which belong to obstacles in strategic goals, and which belong to tactical problems. These research objects can be listed and arranged in matrix form. Then, using the idea of system analysis, various factors can be matched and analyzed, Drawing a series of corresponding conclusions from it often carries a certain degree of decision-making, which is beneficial for leaders and managers to make more accurate decisions and plans (Zhou & Huang, 2023).

Research Methodology

This paper adopts a quantitative research method. By reviewing the 4P marketing theory, collecting, organizing, and analyzing research literature on similar topics, and designing an online survey questionnaire based on the 4P theory, a link and QR code were generated through Questionnaire Star. Since September 2023, a survey questionnaire analysis was conducted on 350 students within and outside the company, and a total of 246 valid survey questionnaires were collected.

Results

This study is based on the 4P marketing theory, combined with relevant literature on the field of postgraduate entrance examination training and a SWOT analysis of the division of labor of New Oriental Online in Jinan. A quantitative research method was used to investigate and analyze the postgraduate entrance examination training business of New Oriental Online's Jinan branch. A total of 12 questionnaire questions were designed, and 246 valid survey questionnaires were successfully distributed and collected. Relevant data was collected and analyzed using SPSS method. The following results were obtained:

The results showed that 55.21% of students chose to take the postgraduate entrance examination tutoring class because they felt that they lacked self-learning ability, 51.16% of students chose to do so because they lacked self-control and self-monitoring ability, 29.62% of students chose to do so because they lacked information gathering ability, 47.39% of students chose to take the postgraduate entrance examination tutoring class because they felt they were not good at the interview, and 14.39% of students chose to do so for other reasons, as shown in Figure 1-1.

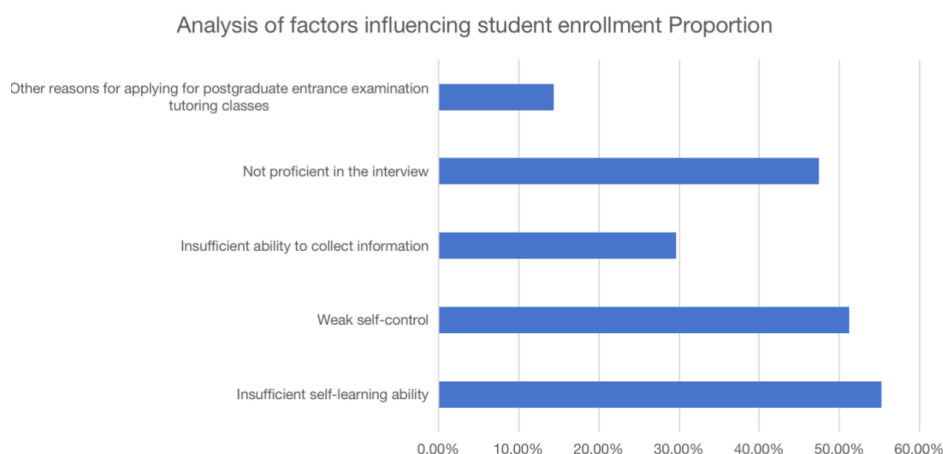


Figure 1-1: Reasons for Choosing a Graduate Entrance Examination Training Institution

In the analysis of the survey questionnaire, the acceptance of prices varies from person to person. 2% of respondents can accept prices ranging from 1000 to 4999, 15% of respondents can accept prices ranging from 5000 to 14999, 28% of respondents can accept prices ranging from 15000 to 25000, and 35% of respondents can accept prices above 25000. It is not difficult to find that products priced above 25000 have the highest acceptance, which means that current postgraduate entrance examination consumers are willing to pay for good products, Of course, on the other hand, it may also be the current postgraduate entrance examination training market, which mainly focuses on courses priced above 20000 yuan, as shown in Figure 3.2. This price analysis also tells us that good products can gain recognition from consumers who take the postgraduate entrance examination. Of course, this may also be related to the overall consumption level and consumption philosophy of students in Shandong region.

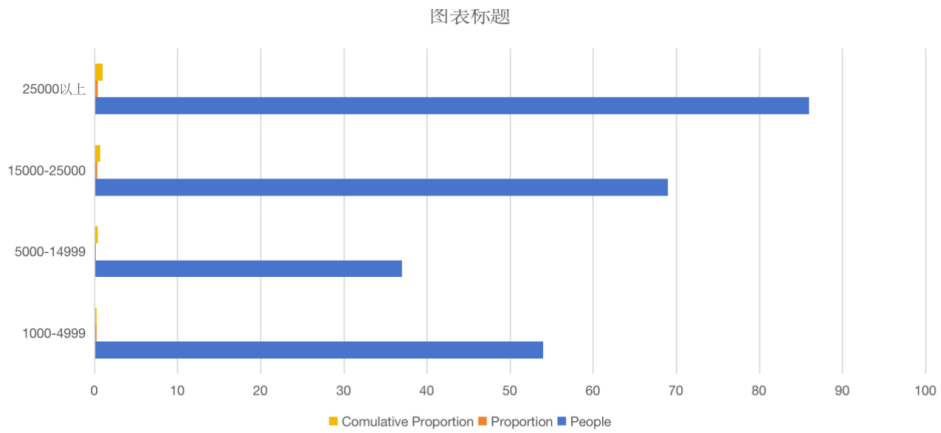


Figure 1-2: Acceptance of Prices

With the continuous progress of society, the channels for students to receive external information are constantly increasing. Different students will receive different information through different methods. From the survey questionnaire, it can be seen that 28.14% of students are introduced by classmates or senior sisters, and some of the recommendations from classmates are recognized. 13.01% of students learn about tutoring classes through campus advertisements, and 17.63% of students learn about graduate entrance examination institutions through campus public lectures, 26.83% of students learned about the postgraduate entrance examination institutions through online channels, as shown in Figure 1-3.

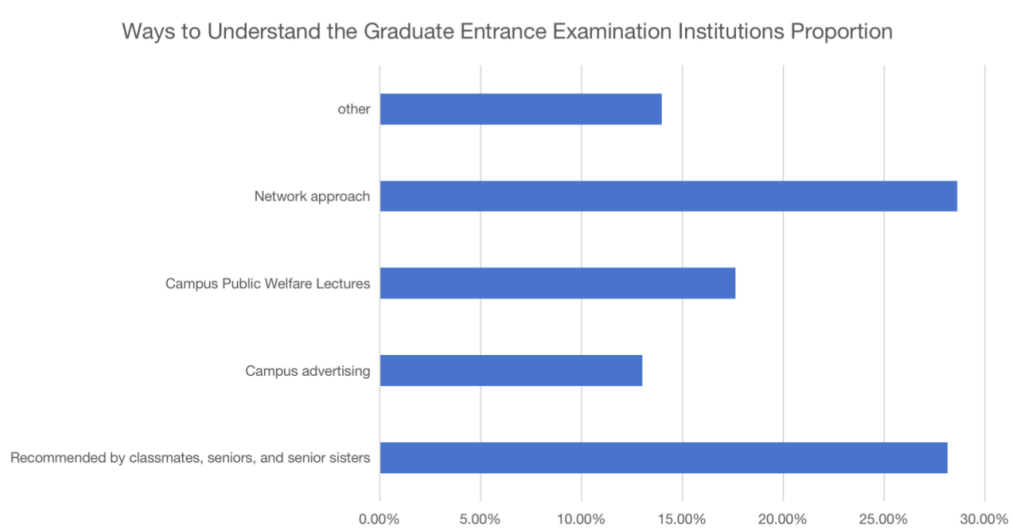


Figure 1-3: Channels for Students to Understand Tutoring Classes

According to the analysis of the survey questionnaire, 65% of students are willing to introduce their participation in the postgraduate entrance examination tutoring class to their classmates if they think it is good. 32% of students are unwilling to let others know that they have participated in the postgraduate entrance examination tutoring class, and 3% of students are unsure whether they will recommend it to their classmates. In terms of class teacher service supervision, 6% of the students are very dissatisfied with the class teacher supervision service, 19% of the students are not satisfied with the class teacher supervision service, 27% of the students express average class teacher service, 32% of the students are satisfied with the class teacher supervision service, and 16% of the students are very satisfied with the class teacher service. In terms of course content and quality, 39% of students were very satisfied, 28% were satisfied, 25% said it was average, and 8% felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied; In terms of course scheduling, 58% of students expressed satisfaction or great satisfaction, 21% of students expressed average, and 21% of students expressed dissatisfaction or great dissatisfaction; In terms of learning environment, 63% of students expressed great satisfaction and satisfaction, 19% of students expressed average, and 18% of students expressed dissatisfaction and great dissatisfaction, as shown in Figure 1-4.

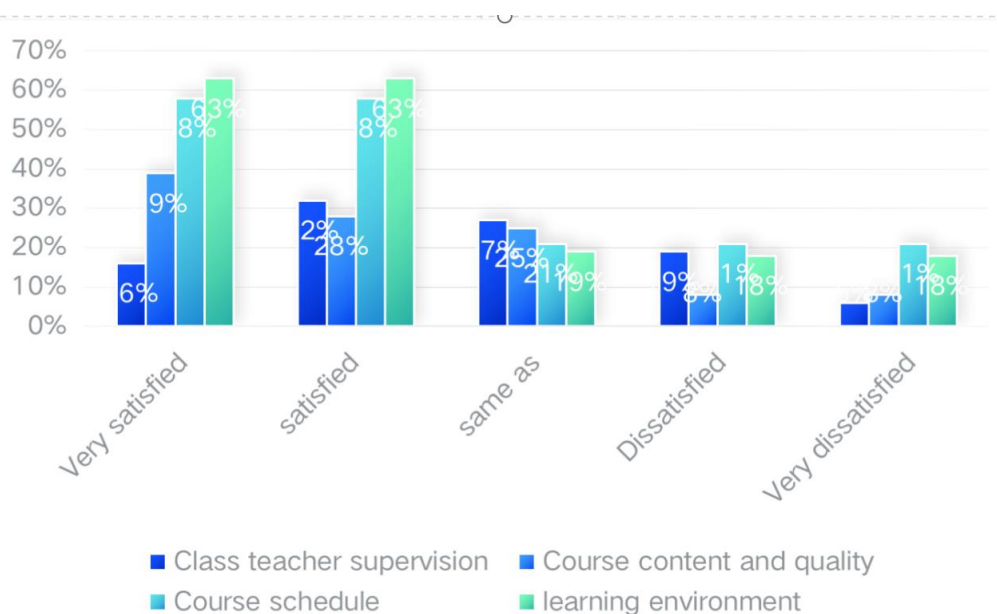


Figure 1-4: Student Satisfaction Survey Results of New Oriental Online Jinan Branch

New Knowledges

Once successful referrals are made, both the students and the introduced students can receive cash rewards and class registration preferential policies. Market the referral methods for students, guide them in which aspects to make referrals and recommendations, and communicate the recommended list with the marketing specialist in a timely manner. Invite them to listen and promote sales. Once successful referrals are made, corresponding rewards will be immediately redeemed. Internally purchased by students, guiding friends around them to enter the class for learning, can also receive enrollment benefits, such as study abroad funds, which can also increase the effectiveness of promotions.

Conclusions

New Oriental Online Jinan Branch has been engaged in postgraduate entrance examination training business in Shandong Province for 13 years. For a long time, the company has been deeply cultivating postgraduate entrance examination training with a strategy of "teaching and research oriented, not valuing famous teachers", and has established a certain advantage in this industry.

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