Marketing Strategies that Resulted in the Decision to Study at Mianyang Vocational Flight College, China

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is to study the college’s marketing strategies that resulted in the decision to study at Mianyang Vocational Flight College. The research population comprises students enrolled at Mianyang Vocational Flight College, with a carefully sampled group of 242 participants selected through a simple random method, as guided by Krejcie and Morgan's Table (1970) for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population. The research instruments utilized include a well-designed questionnaire, structured into four sections covering diverse aspects such as basic information, satisfaction levels, marketing strategies, and open-ended suggestions. The statistics were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean values and standard deviations were employed to provide a comprehensive overview of respondents' characteristics and satisfaction levels. Additionally, inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation analysis, were utilized to explore relationships between different dimensions of marketing strategies. The results were found that students expressed high satisfaction with existing marketing strategies like teaching quality, facilities, academic support, and admission process (means 4.0-4.5/5). Strong positive inter-correlations between satisfaction dimensions emphasized the coherence of current marketing tactics. However, specific areas needing improvement were identified, including more social media, events, upgraded facilities, flexible payment options, and specialized programs. Targeting these could further optimize the college's recruitment strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2022, China revised the "Vocational Education Law," aligning it with regular high school education and emphasizing the expansion of vocational colleges, institutional frameworks, and industry-education collaboration (Vocational Education Law, 2022). The objective is to enhance vocational education guarantees, ensuring equal opportunities for graduates' further education, employment, and career development. Despite a decrease in the total number of private schools, enrollments in private general and vocational undergraduate programs increased by 791,500 students, constituting 25.27% of the nationwide total (National Statistical Report, 2022).

Private vocational colleges, exemplified by the Vocational Flight College of Mianyang, face challenges such as fierce competition for enrollment and limited financial aid. Relying heavily on student tuition fees, institutions like the Vocational Flight College encounter pressure due to policies favoring public universities. To address these challenges, a study conducted in 2022 at the Vocational Flight College of Mianyang utilized literature reviews and a student questionnaire survey. The findings led to proposed recommendations and improvements in recruitment and promotional activities. Insights from this research may offer valuable guidance for similar efforts in other private vocational colleges.

2. Research Objectives

To study the college's marketing strategies that resulted in the decision to study at Mianyang Vocational Flight College.

2.1. Research Framework

The four variables of product, price, place, and promotion shown in Figure 1 are derived from the 4P marketing mix framework.

Fig. 1. Research Framework

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2.2. Literature Review

A marketing expert named E. Jerome McCarthy created the Marketing 4Ps in the 1960s (Quelch, J. A., & Jocz, K. E., 2008). Subsequently, Jerome McCarthy, a renowned marketing expert and professor at the University of Michigan in the 20th century, introduced the "4P" marketing theory in his classic work "Basic Marketing" in 1960. This theory combines the four marketing elements: product, place, price, and promotion (McCarthy, E. J., & Perreault, W. D., 2018). By applying marketing thinking to understand educational marketing, we can consider a school's educational resources and services as the "product" in educational marketing theory, while the tuition and other fees obtained by the school in teaching can be seen as the "price." Different enrollment channels in higher education, such as student bases, can be regarded as various types of "place" in marketing education. In China today, there are numerous promotional websites for different universities, and some universities also promote themselves through newspapers and television, which can be considered as "promotion" activities in educational marketing (Dang Xiaoli, 2019).

Product refers to the curriculum of the college, including pilot training, aviation maintenance, and air traffic control. Price involves determining the tuition fees and financial assistance options available to students. Place encompasses the physical campus facilities, location, and accessibility of the college. Promotion involves the marketing and promotional activities undertaken by the Mianyang Vocational Flight College to create awareness and attract potential students, such as advertising campaigns, participation in industry events, and partnerships with aviation organizations.

Wu Zhitao (2023) points out several issues in current domestic university enrollment promotion. These include a lack of proper marketing concepts, outdated promotional methods, inaccurate market positioning, and a failure to establish scientific and reasonable integrated marketing strategies for service products. Yu Chao, Liu Minzhong and Bin Fen (2023) believe that China has entered a stage of mass higher education, and the changing market demand has further influenced the position of universities in enrollment, thus impacting their enrollment promotion efforts. Therefore, universities in the new era must change the traditional enrollment promotion model and incorporate new ideas and marketing strategies into their enrollment promotion efforts. 

Qian Cheng (2023) conducted research on university enrollment promotion from the perspective of educational equity. He believes that false advertising in university admissions is an improper competitive behavior that disrupts market order, negatively affects the social reputation of schools, and may even impact the entire education industry. To optimize the order of enrollment markets and improve the quality of enrollment promotion information, it is necessary to improve the university enrollment system, establish mechanisms to prevent dishonesty, and regulate the behavior of university enrollment promotion.

3. Research Methodology

The research population comprised 638 students enrolled at Mianyang Vocational Flight College in the 2022 academic year. Stratified random sampling was utilized to determine an appropriate sample of 242 students as indicated by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table. Participants completed a 32-item self-administered online questionnaire, assessing satisfaction levels across four sections. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale and exhibited high internal consistency (α = 0.97) as well as validity as determined by KMO and Bartlett's tests. A larger sample of 250 students was targeted for improved representation.

3.1. Data Collection

In this study, data was collected through a questionnaire survey designed based on the research questions, literature review, conceptual framework, and relevant concepts pertaining to the research topic. The survey was distributed to students enrolled in the 2022 academic year at Vocational Flight College of Mianyang through various online channels, including WeChat, Friend Circle, Weibo, and QQ.

3.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics such as percentages to summarize demographic characteristics. Satisfaction and agreement levels were analyzed utilizing measures of central tendency like means and standard deviations. An open-ended component allowed for content analysis of qualitative responses to identify meaningful improvements for enrollment strategies. Rigorous methodology comprising appropriate sampling, instrument validation, mixed analysis techniques and stratified data collection aimed to provide insights to better cater to students when promoting new enrollments at this vocational college.

4. Results

Table 1. Students' Satisfactory Level of Current Marketing Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Conditions</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Facilities and Equipment</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Support Services</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Process</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 presents the results of a comprehensive evaluation of students' satisfaction with four dimensions of the college's marketing strategies. Based on responses from 242 survey participants, it includes four key dimensions: Teaching conditions (M: 3.85, Rank: 1), Admission Process (M: 3.85, Rank: 1), Campus facilities and equipment (M: 3.84, Rank: 3), and Teaching support services (M: 3.81, Rank: 4). The level of satisfaction in each dimension is considered high.
Based on the questionnaire survey analysis, it can be concluded that students at Vocational Flight College of Mianyang demonstrate high levels of satisfaction with existing marketing strategies related to teaching conditions, campus facilities, support services, and the admission process. The research reveals a strong positive correlation between these marketing dimensions, affirming their collective influence on student perceptions. Additionally, the findings indicate a strong desire among students for more active social media presence and campus events as part of promotion strategies. Enhanced facilities, flexible payment options, tailored aviation programs, and leveraging digital platforms also emerge as key recommendations for improving enrollment promotion efforts.

5. Recommendations

Based on the lowest student satisfaction mean values:

5.1. Enhance Curriculum Quality

According to the data, students' satisfaction with "Curriculum design" is relatively low. It is recommended that the college improves curriculum design to ensure that it meets students' expectations and needs.
5.1.2. Improve Campus Network

Based on the data, students' satisfaction with "Campus network" is relatively low. The college should consider optimizing the campus network to provide a better online learning and research experience.

5.1.3. Increase Extracurricular Activities

The data suggests that students are less satisfied with "Extracurricular activities." It is advisable for the college to diversify extracurricular activities to cater to students' interests and requirements.

5.1.4. Provide More Career Guidance

According to the data, students' satisfaction with "Employment guidance" is relatively low. The recommendation is for the college to strengthen its career guidance services, aiding students in better career planning.

5.1.5. Streamline Admission Process

The data indicates that students' satisfaction with the "Admission Process" is relatively low. The college should consider simplifying the admission process, improving efficiency, and providing a better service experience.

5.2. Based on the highest student agreement levels:

5.2.1. Strengthen Social Media Promotion

As per the data, students strongly recommend enhancing the college's presence and engagement on social media platforms. It is advisable for the college to increase its social media presence and interact more effectively with prospective students.

5.2.2. Organize Campus Open House and Information Seminars

Data indicates that students strongly suggest organizing more campus open house events and information seminars. This can assist in attracting prospective students and providing comprehensive information about the college.

5.2.3. Maintain Reasonable Tuition Fees

As per the data, students are highly satisfied with the reasonable tuition fees. The college should continue to offer tuition fees at a competitive rate to retain current students and attract new ones.

5.2.4. Enhance Facility Quality

According to the data, students express high satisfaction with campus facilities and equipment. The recommendation is to continue improving the quality of facilities to maintain student satisfaction.

5.2.5. Promote Alumni Success Stories

As indicated in the data, students suggest that the college emphasizes alumni success stories in its advertising. This strategy can serve as a source of motivation for prospective students and enhance the college's reputation.

References