

Exploring the Implementation of the 7Ps in Guangdong's MBA Education Programs: A Comprehensive Study

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Abstract

This paper applies the 7Ps marketing strategy to optimize MBA education marketing in Guangdong, China, covering product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and pre-interview aspects. The core product focuses on doctoral program application, subject assessment, and international accreditation, with tangible products emphasizing brand building, practical activities, and rankings. Additional offerings include enhancing internationalization, increasing student cohesion, providing life-oriented services, establishing an alumni management model, and improving service levels. Pricing aims for reasonability over being the lowest, while optimization of place involves physical, virtual, and hybrid channels. Promotion strategies include an all-staff approach, PR enhancement, word-of-mouth marketing, and media synergy. Management extends to faculty, staff, mentors, counselors, and committee members. Creating professional enrollment materials is emphasized, alongside pre-interview promotion and teaching MBA students marketing skills, reflecting the globalization context for tailoring marketing strategies.

Keywords: marketing strategy, MBA study, 7Ps, Master of Business Administration

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Introduction

Over the past decade, China's economy has experienced continuous growth, attracting increasing global attention. In 2011, China's GDP reached \$7.55 trillion, precisely \$7,551,545,321,799, accounting for 10.2211% of the world's GDP. By 2022, China's GDP surpassed the milestone of \$17.96 trillion, precisely \$17,963,170,521,079, representing 17.8628% of the world's GDP. As a result, China has become the world's second-largest economy. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, China emerged as the largest recipient of global foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2020, attracting a capital inflow of \$163 billion. With its rapid economic development, China is increasingly recognized as the largest international education market globally (Zreik, 2023).

Due to its open policies and ongoing economic reforms, China has consistently sustained an average GDP growth rate of over 9% for the past two decades (Morrison, 2002). The swift development of the Chinese economy and its further integration into the global market create an urgent demand for qualified professionals with Master of Business Administration (MBA) credentials to contribute to China's economic prosperity (Newell, 1999; Shi, 2000; Southworth, 1999). However, Chinese higher education institutions are fundamentally incapable of meeting the demand for managerial talent, resulting in a significant gap between supply and demand that presents a vast market for MBA education.

Table 1 GDP Data for China from 2011 to 2022

years	GDP (US Dollar)	% of the world
2011	7.55 trillion (7,551,545,321,799)	10.2211%
2012	8.53 trillion (8,532,185,615,746)	11.2970%
2013	9.57 trillion (9,570,470,577,244)	12.3275%
2014	10.48 trillion (10,475,624,783,235)	13.1345%
2015	11.06 trillion (11,061,573,199,439)	14.7066%
2016	11.23 trillion (11,233,314,018,690)	14.6867%
2017	12.31 trillion (12,310,491,176,727)	15.1156%
2018	13.89 trillion (13,894,907,485,398)	16.0631%
2019	14.28 trillion (14,279,968,485,748)	16.2775%
2020	14.69 trillion (14,687,743,556,969)	17.2361%
2021	17.82 trillion (17,820,459,342,451)	18.3939%
2022	17.96 trillion (17,963,170,521,079)	17.8628%

Since the early 1990s, MBA education in Mainland China has experienced rapid development. In 1991, the establishment of a National MBA Coordinating Group led to the implementation of pilot MBA courses. Initially, nine universities were authorized to offer a total of 86 pilot MBA courses (Wang, 1999). Subsequently, an additional 17 universities were included in this experimental initiative, resulting in a total of 26 universities eligible to provide MBA education in China by 1993. Given the general lack of specialized knowledge and teaching materials for MBA education in Chinese higher education institutions, many of these experimental universities sought assistance from foreign counterparts. Notably, Nanjing University collaborated with the University of Missouri-Columbia, Tsinghua University received support from the University of Western Ontario, and Peking University partnered with Fordham University.

Understandably, many Chinese MBA programs initially incorporated Western curricula into their courses (Shi, 2000). By 2002, Guangdong's MBA education transitioned from the experimental stage to a developmental stage, with 62 universities authorized to offer MBA courses, among which 30 universities were approved to provide Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) courses. By 2022, the number of institutions offering MBA education in China had reached 277. Enrollment numbers surged from less than 30,000 in 2011 to 50,000 in 2022. The MBA journey in China has evolved from nonexistence to significance, from modest beginnings to substantial scale, and from relative obscurity to being a sought-after dream for millions of candidates. MBA programs have significantly contributed to society by nurturing a substantial number of middle and senior-level management professionals.

Table 2 Provincial MBA Program Applicants and Admissions from 2011 to 2023

Years	Number of applicants	Number of admissions	Admission ratio
2011	90614	29736	32.82%
2012	106862	28931	27.07%
2013	123017	32625	26.52%
2014	128299	31944	24.90%
2015	122016	30363	24.88%
2016	109580	24642	22.49%
2017	142389	35112	24.66%
2018	170096	38915	22.89%
2019	204160	40000	27.00%

Table 2 (Cont.)

Years	Number of applicants	Number of admissions	Admission ratio
2020	about 22 0,000	42315	26.45%
2021	about 230,000	about 50000	about 27.78%
2022	about 25000	about 50000	About20%
2023	about 250,000	about 51842	About20%

With the burgeoning landscape of MBA education in China, students now have an array of programs to choose from, ranging from those offered by prestigious "Double First Class" universities to local institutions. Additionally, students can consider various types of programs such as Professional Master, Academic Master, and Executive Master of Business Administration, among others. Consequently, marketing challenges in MBA education are inevitable. In China, the entrance to MBA programs typically follows a unified examination system, where students must undergo nationwide entrance examinations and interviews for admission. Moreover, the Chinese MBA landscape incorporates a pre-interview marketing model, with some universities offering students the chance to participate in interviews before the national entrance exam, potentially leading to direct admission.

Notably, Guangdong's MBA admission criteria include specific work experience requirements. Applicants must possess a bachelor's degree with three years of work experience, an associate degree with five years of work experience, or a graduate degree with two years of work experience to be eligible for the MBA program. These criteria differ from those of many foreign universities, highlighting the need for tailored marketing strategies that may not be universally applicable across different countries and timeframes.

This research aims to leverage the 7Ps framework within the context of China's specific circumstances to explore effective MBA marketing strategies. Its objective is to offer valuable insights for marketing MBA education in China and serve as a reference for future marketing endeavors in this domain.

Literature Review

The marketing mix refers to a set of controllable marketing tools that an institution employs to elicit the desired response from its diverse target markets (Ivy, 2008). Grönroos (1997) introduced the concept of the 4Ps marketing mix, which includes product, price, promotion, and place (distribution). Booms and Bitner (1981) extended the 4Ps marketing mix to 7Ps by adding participants, processes, and physical evidence. Kotler (1986a, 1986b) augmented the 4Ps with political power and public opinion, evolving it to the 6Ps. Baumgartner (1991) expanded the marketing mix to 15Ps, incorporating elements such as product/service, price, promotion, place, people, politics, public relations, probe, partition, prioritize, position, profit, plan, performance, and positive implementations.

Goldsmith (1999) introduced the personalized "P" to reflect the trends of the internet era, studying the 8Ps marketing mix, which encompasses McCarthy's 4Ps, personalization, and the 3Ps of service path: personnel, physical assets, and procedures. Ivy (2008) investigated MBA education in the South African region using a 7Ps marketing mix: people, promotion, price, program, prominence, prospectus, and premiums. Kotler and Keller (2012) explored a 4P+4P marketing mix, incorporating product, price, promotion, place, people, processes, programs, and performance.

John et al. (2023) studied the MBA landscape in the Indian region, referencing Ivy's 7Ps marketing mix and proposed a 10Ps marketing mix, including people, promotion, price, program, prominence, prospectus, premiums, pass-rate, placements, and probity. These various marketing mix strategies have emerged based on different geographical regions and research subjects. However, as the world's second-largest economy, China has made significant strides in MBA education, necessitating the development of a marketing mix strategy tailored to the unique Chinese context (Tabelessy et al., 2023).

This article was chosen due to its comprehensive exploration of MBA marketing strategies through the lens of the 7Ps framework: product, price, place, promotion, participants, physical evidence, and pre-approval interview. By encompassing these key components, the article provides a holistic understanding of the marketing dynamics within the MBA education sector. The inclusion of these factors allows for a thorough analysis of how MBA programs are positioned, priced, promoted, and perceived by various stakeholders. Additionally, the consideration of participants and pre-approval interviews sheds light on the importance of engaging with prospective students and addressing their needs throughout the enrollment process. To analyze and synthesize this article effectively, one can scrutinize each P individually to assess its impact on MBA marketing strategies while also synthesizing the interactions and interdependencies between these elements. By critically evaluating how each aspect contributes to the overall marketing mix, one can glean valuable insights into optimizing MBA education marketing efforts and enhancing student enrollment experiences.

Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study involved conducting in-depth interviews with participants. These interviews were conducted multiple times, typically ranging from 3 to 4 sessions or more, depending on the depth of understanding required and the complexity of the research questions. This multi-session approach allowed researchers to delve deeply into participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

To ensure the suitability and reliability of the information gathered from these interviews, several measures were implemented. Firstly, interview participants were carefully selected based on their expertise, experience, and relevance to the research topic. This helped ensure that the information provided was accurate and insightful. Additionally, interview questions were designed to be open-ended and flexible, allowing for detailed exploration of key themes and issues. This approach encouraged participants to share their perspectives freely, contributing to the richness and depth of the data collected.

Furthermore, techniques such as member checking and triangulation were utilized to verify the consistency and validity of the information obtained from the interviews. Member checking involved sharing

preliminary findings with participants to confirm their accuracy and relevance, while triangulation involved cross-referencing information from multiple sources to corroborate key findings. By employing these rigorous methods, the study was able to confirm the results obtained from the in-depth interviews and enhance the overall reliability of the research findings.

Design of Interview Questions

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of MBA education administrators and students regarding marketing strategies in the Chinese context, this study employed a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. These interviews were designed to explore the viewpoints of both MBA administrators and students regarding marketing strategies within the realm of Chinese MBA education. The interview questions were structured around two primary levels of inquiry: firstly, participants' perceptions and recommendations concerning marketing in Chinese MBA education, and secondly, their insights and suggestions regarding the future development of MBA education in China.

Interview Process and Method

To determine the number of samples and how many students each, several factors need consideration, including the research scope, diversity of perspectives, and feasibility. In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select five universities in Guangdong Province, China, namely Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, Guangzhou University, Guangdong University of Technology, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, and South China Normal University. A total of 10 administrators and 20 MBA students participated in the in-depth interviews.

The number of samples, particularly the breakdown of administrators, was determined based on the need for qualitative analysis and representation from different administrative roles within the universities. In this case, 10 administrators were selected, including 5 deans (including associate deans), 4 department heads, and 1 lecturer, to ensure diverse perspectives from key decision-makers and influencers in MBA education.

For student participants, the number was determined to ensure a balanced representation across the selected universities and to capture a variety of perspectives and experiences. With 20 MBA students selected, an average of 4 students were included from each university, ensuring a reasonable sample size while maintaining diversity in participant demographics and program experiences.

The actual interview questions related to the marketing mix 7Ps were tailored to elicit insights from both administrators and students regarding their perceptions, experiences, and suggestions for MBA enrollment strategies and program satisfaction. For administrators, questions focused on effective enrollment strategies, perceptions of Chinese MBA programs, and future development trajectories. For students, questions explored aspects of their chosen MBA programs that appealed to them, anticipations, satisfaction levels, and suggestions for program enhancement. These questions aimed to gather comprehensive insights into the marketing dynamics of MBA education in the Chinese context.

Results

Through in-depth interviews with 10 administrators and 20 MBA students, comprehensive discussions were conducted to gather insights into promoting the Chinese MBA education market. Following the compilation and organization of their opinions and recommendations, the resulting 7Ps marketing mix for promoting the Chinese MBA education market is as follows:

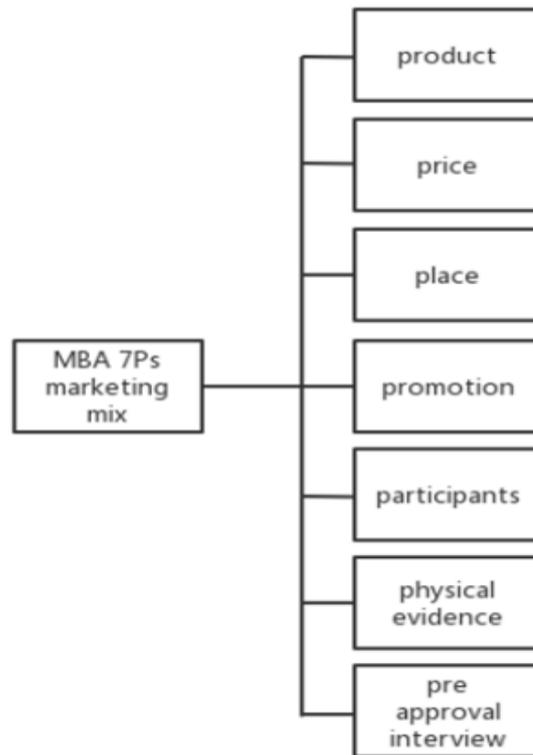


Figure 1 Diagram of MBA 7Ps Marketing Mix

Product

Product refers to a combination of goods that individuals acquire through purchases to fulfill specific needs and desires. It serves as the focal point of a company's marketing efforts, aligning societal demands with business provisions. Products play a crucial role in a company's competitiveness, necessitating continuous updates to cater to evolving market needs. Thus, having a superior product is essential for effective marketing. The success of a product strategy hinges on its correctness and effectiveness once introduced to the market. The overall product encompasses three levels: the core product, tangible product, and augmented product.

1. Core Product

The core product refers to the fundamental utility or benefit that a product provides. It represents the ultimate need of customers and holds their highest value. The core product addresses customers' genuine needs and real intentions. It forms the most fundamental level of a product, satisfying customers' essential requirements – the tangible essence of what customers purchase. For MBA education, the core product is the construction of the MBA discipline. By studying for an MBA, individuals accumulate knowledge and enhance

their educational qualifications, thus boosting their core competitiveness. Achieving breakthroughs in MBA discipline construction requires an emphasis on doctoral program applications, subject evaluations, and international accreditation.

The presence of doctoral programs in business administration significantly influences candidates' willingness to apply to MBA education institutions in China. Some students view an MBA as a stepping stone toward a future doctoral degree, considering it comparatively easier to obtain than other master's degrees. Institutions offering doctoral programs are more attractive to these students. Therefore, MBA education institutions must prioritize the development of doctoral programs in business administration as a crucial initiative. In Guangdong Province, there are a total of 5 institutions with doctoral programs in business administration: Sun Yat-sen University, South China University of Technology, Jinan University, South China Agricultural University, and Guangzhou University. However, regular undergraduate universities such as Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, and Guangdong University of Technology do not offer doctoral programs in this field.

Table 3 List of Colleges and Universities with Doctoral Programs in Business Administration in Guangdong Province

serial number	School Name	status of the doctoral curriculum
1	Sun Yat-sen University	Sun Yat-sen University has a doctoral program for first-level disciplines in business administration and 5 doctoral programs for second-level disciplines in business administration
2	South China University of Technology	South China University of Technology has doctoral programs in the first level disciplines of business administration and three doctoral programs in second-level disciplines in business administration
3	Jinan University	Jinan University has a doctoral program for first-level disciplines in business administration and 7 doctoral programs for second-level disciplines in business administration

Table 3 (Cont.)

serial number	School Name	status of the doctoral curriculum
4	South China Agricultural University	South China Agricultural University has doctoral programs in the first-level disciplines of business administration and 5 doctoral programs in the second-level disciplines in business administration
5	Guangzhou University	Guangzhou University has doctoral programs in the first-level disciplines of business administration and 4 doctoral programs in the second-level disciplines of business administration

2. Subject Evaluation

Subject evaluation plays a pivotal role in assessing discipline construction levels, diagnosing developmental issues within a field of study, and measuring the quality of talent cultivation. It also serves as a robust means to promote the development of China's distinctive theoretical and discourse systems, playing a vital role in the principles of "promoting construction through evaluation" and "promoting improvement through evaluation." In the initial national professional degree level evaluation, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangdong University of Technology, and Guangdong University of Finance and Economics were graded as B-, C, and C, respectively, for their MBA programs.

In the assessment of MBA programs across various institutions, Sun Yat-sen University received an A rating, indicating a high level of achievement. South China Technology University's assessment is not available. Jinan University and South China Agricultural University also lack assessment information. Shantou University received a C rating, while South China Normal University was rated slightly higher at C+. Shenzhen University obtained a B rating. Guangdong University of Finance and Economics received a C rating, while Guangzhou University's assessment status is not provided. Guangdong University of Technology received a C rating, and assessment information for Guangdong University of Foreign Studies is not provided.

3. International Accreditation

Established in 1967, the Association of MBAs (AMBA) is recognized as one of the three authoritative global international accreditation systems for business education, alongside the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS). AMBA is an international accreditation system exclusively focused on MBA programs, emphasizing the development of business, and MBA programs, emphasizing the development of business and management practices. It aims to assist member institutions in progressing from success to excellence.

For business schools, achieving AMBA accreditation signifies international recognition of their educational standards, particularly the teaching quality of their MBA programs. For MBA students and alumni,

the value of their degrees is significantly elevated. For employers, choosing graduates from accredited institutions indicates a higher level of quality assurance.

Table 4 International accreditation of MBA colleges in Guangdong Province

serial number	institutions			
1	Sun Yat-sen University	certified	certified	Certified
2	South China Technology University	certified	Pass certification eligibility assessment	Certified by AMBA
3	Jinan University	About to be certified	not yet started	certified
4	South China Agricultural University	not yet started	not yet started	BGA member
5	Shantou University	not yet started	not yet started	BGA member
6	South China Normal University	not yet started	not yet started	BGA member
7	Shenzhen University	enter the final stage	not yet started	Starting certification
8	Guangdong University of Finance and Economics	member	not yet started	BGA member
9	Guangzhou University	turning on	not yet started	Starting certification
10	Guangdong University of Technology	member	not yet started	BGA member
11	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	member	starting	Certified by AMBA

The landscape of subject development within MBA education institutions in China faces numerous challenges, including a shortage of academic leaders, limited national-level research projects, inadequate platforms and teams at the national level, and a scarcity of articles in top international journals. Subject development, being a cornerstone of institutional growth, requires comprehensive efforts and long-term commitment. It encompasses seven key modules: ideological and political education, talent cultivation, faculty team enhancement, scientific research advancement, platform establishment, international exchange promotion, and institutional mechanism refinement. Addressing these challenges and investing in these modules are essential for the sustainable development and advancement of MBA education institutions in China.

4. Optimization of Tangible Products

Tangible products refer to the specific forms or ways in which a product is presented to achieve the desired satisfaction in the target market. These mainly include branding, practical activities, rankings, and more. Burton Clark's perspective that "decentralized control leads to university competition, where the focus of competition is obtaining relative reputation. Once reputation is established, it becomes the university's most unique and valuable resource" is equally applicable to the MBA education market. The reputation of MBA institutions is reflected in the brand's recognition, reputation, and loyalty. Building and continuously enhancing the reputation of MBA education is a systematic process involving innovative concepts, curriculum design, faculty strength, management quality, and service standards. Branding efficiently transforms resources into value and gains customer recognition. This signifies quality and reputation assurance, guides consumer choices, and also serves a profit-oriented function. To enhance the brand image of Chinese MBA education institutions, breakthroughs should be made in branding, distinctive activities, and rankings.

5. Branding

"Brand is quality" and "Brand is vitality." As MBA education reform deepens, establishing an MBA education brand is an essential path for the development of every cultivating institution. The MBA brand serves as a crucial channel to enter the student and employment markets. Establishing a brand can secure the future of MBA education. A renowned MBA education brand not only attracts potential high-quality students but also contributes to fostering excellent talent and facilitating re-employment among students. It drives the overall development of MBA education. The importance of branding is evident across various aspects such as enrollment, education, and employment.

6. Practical Activities

MBA education encompasses more than just academic courses. Schools leverage their resources to provide students with abundant practical opportunities. Monthly financial forums or entrepreneurship salons, inviting practicing mentors and entrepreneurs to campus for exchanges, facilitate the sharing of practical experiences in entrepreneurship and management.

7. Rankings

Currently, multiple media-driven MBA education rankings have emerged in China. These include "China's Most Influential MBA Rankings" co-hosted by the World Manager Weekly and Chief Executive Officer

magazine, "China's Best MBA Rankings" launched by Manager magazine, and "Most Market-Valued MBA" by Fortune (Chinese edition).

8. Additional Products

This is the third level of the overall product, referring to the additional services or benefits that customers receive when purchasing a product. These can include offerings such as credit provision, free delivery, installation, maintenance, returns, and after-sales services. Modern market competition not only revolves around what products are produced and sold but also the nature of the additional services and benefits provided. While past market competition mainly focused on the competition of the product itself, today it also encompasses the competition of services.

The teaching of MBA programs condenses the management experiences of top business leaders into a two-year curriculum, providing students with exposure to various aspects of business management. It equips them with tools and frameworks for making a range of decisions, nurturing the future leaders of the corporate world. In addition to this, if MBA institutions can offer extra value beyond the core program, these "surprises" can impact the choices of MBA applicants. The additional value of MBA education includes opportunities for international exchanges, membership in alumni clubs, and networking events.

Price

Price is not merely the tuition fee figure presented by MBA institutions. A reputable MBA education provider will seek ways to reduce or eliminate psychological costs associated with pricing. Chinese MBA education institutions should adhere to rational pricing rather than a strategy of lowest pricing. The concept of the lowest pricing might even be perceived as top by MBA applicants as a passive choice made due to the lack of innovative value-added measures by the MBA institution. The author suggests that maintaining the price of MBA programs within two-thirds of the fees of local universities is competitive. Adjustments in pricing can be implemented gradually, following a "take small steps without stopping" approach. Additionally, setting up a range of scholarship policies can attract candidates, contributing to brand enhancement.

Comparing the tuition fees of various universities in Guangdong Province over the past four years, it is evident that among the 10 local institutions, 9 MBA programs have made adjustments in their fees. Specifically, in 2020, five institutions adjusted their fees, followed by two institutions in 2021.

Table 5 Statistics on Part-time MBA Tuition Fees of Colleges and Universities in Guangdong Province from 2019 to 2022

	School	Part-time MBA Tuition Fee (RMB) and Academic Length			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
1	School of Management, Sun Yat-sen University	255,000/ 3 years	255,000/ 3 years	255,000/ 3 years	318,000/ 3 years
2	Lingnan College of Sun Yat-sen University	255,000/ 3 years	255,000/ 3 years	255,000/ 3 years	268,000/ 3 years

Table 5 (Cont.)

	School	Part-time MBA Tuition Fee (RMB) and Academic Length			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
3	School of Technology South China University	200,000/ 3 years	200,000/ 3 years	200,000/ 3 years	200,000/ 3 years
4	Jinan University	155,000/ 3 years	200,000/ 3 years	298,000/ 3 years	298,000/ 3 years
5	Shenzhen University	118,000/ 3 years	198,000/ 3 years	198,000/ 3 years	198,000/ 3 years
6	South China Normal University	135,000/ 3 years	135,000/ 3 years	168,000/ 3 years	168,000/ 3 years
7	Guangdong University of Foreign Study	108,000/ 3 years	138,000/ 3 years	168,000/ 3 years	168,000/ 3 years
8	Guangdong University of Finance and Economics	100,000/ 2.5 years	100,000/ 2.5 years	120,000/ 2.5 years	168,000/ 3 years
9	Shantou University	108,000/ 3 years	108,000/ 3 years	120,000/ 2.5 years	120,000/ 2.5 years
10	Guangdong University of Technology	75,000/ 3 years	108,000/ 3 years	135,000/ 3 years	135,000/ 3 years

Place

The distribution strategy holds significant importance within the broader marketing framework, impacting cost reduction and competitive advantage enhancement. As market dynamics evolve, so do marketing channels, necessitating adaptations to meet changing consumer behaviors. In the context of Chinese MBA education, where 72% of candidates rely on recommendations from peers and 25% utilize media websites for information gathering, optimizing media channels and strengthening connections with referrals and coaching organizations become paramount. This integration of internal and external marketing efforts ensures alignment between MBA marketing targets and institutional objectives. Recognizing the unique nature of MBA programs, reliant on word-of-mouth recommendations and brand enhancement, this article's distribution strategy emphasizes the optimization of physical, virtual, and hybrid channels:

Expanding Physical Channels: Engaging with relevant government departments, business associations, and benchmark enterprises is essential for specialized areas like big data intelligence and intelligent manufacturing. Providing early batch applications and exam preparation consultations, along with distributing study materials, can enhance engagement with MBA aspirants.

Enhancing Virtual Channels: Leveraging internet technologies and mainstream social media platforms enables the dissemination of MBA program information through soft articles and advertisements, catering to online information seekers.

Combining Virtual and Physical Channels: Recognizing the limitations of online marketing in facilitating real-time interactions, coaching institution websites can serve as initial touchpoints for candidates. Subsequently, organizing in-person presentations by coaching institutions helps provide experiential insights and enrollment information, augmenting the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

Promotion

The promotion strategy plays a pivotal role in conveying product information to consumers, encompassing techniques like personal selling, public relations, marketing promotions, and media advertising. Its ultimate goal is to captivate consumers' attention, stimulate interest, evoke desire, and prompt purchase behavior, thereby achieving sales objectives. In the realm of MBA program marketing, enrollment departments continually analyze market dynamics and adjust promotion strategies based on product characteristics and market responses. It is imperative for Chinese MBA programs to adopt a whole-team marketing approach, leveraging resources from various departments and engaging academic leaders, teaching staff, external mentors, and other stakeholders in the marketing effort. Establishing a unified front and nurturing strong public relations are vital aspects, particularly in maintaining positive relationships with student recommenders and enhancing promotional efforts. Furthermore, emphasizing word-of-mouth marketing ensures long-term and sustainable development by leveraging its credibility, targeting precision, cost-effectiveness, and high success rates. In the digital era, MBA marketing must embrace new media platforms such as mobile apps, social media, and WeChat to expand brand promotion efforts. Through alumni engagement, MBA forums, and diverse activities, institutions can enhance the visibility and reputation of their MBA programs, ultimately attracting more prospective students.

Participants

In the fiercely competitive landscape of MBA education, effective management of personnel is imperative for institutions to thrive. Offering convenient access to MBA services and even personalized assistance, such as on-site support from teachers, particularly for corporate clients, can greatly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, Chinese MBA institutions must prioritize the efficient management and optimization of personnel involved in MBA education. This includes faculty members, administrative staff, mentors, counseling coordinators, and class representatives. By ensuring that these individuals are well-equipped, motivated, and aligned with the institution's objectives, MBA institutions can deliver high-quality education and services, ultimately attracting and retaining valuable customers in the competitive market.

Physical evidence

The promotional strategy for educational programs, including MBA institutions, differs from conventional business promotion due to the unique nature of educational services and target markets. Instead of relying heavily on traditional advertising and personal selling, educational programs should concentrate their promotional efforts on their primary target markets. Word-of-mouth recommendations and public relations efforts play a crucial role in promoting educational programs effectively. Positive experiences shared by students

contribute significantly to enhancing the brand value and reputation of educational institutions. Collaborating with government entities, corporations, and institutions to organize educational projects further promotes the brand and attracts potential students.

Regarding tangible displays, creating well-designed and professional enrollment brochures, prospectuses, and presentations is essential. These materials serve as important tools for prospective MBA applicants to assess the quality of education and make informed decisions. Enrollment brochures should reflect the institution's sophistication and professionalism, providing tangible evidence of the service quality. They should focus on presenting key aspects such as the institution's history, course overview, student activities, and testimonials from graduates. Emphasis should be placed on maintaining a consistent style aligned with the institution's message, presenting comprehensive content, and ensuring a visually appealing and easy-to-read presentation for MBA applicants.

Pre-approval interview

In China, the mainstream approach for domestic MBA candidates involves participation in the National MBA Entrance Examination, which offers two specific formats: the Early Batch and the Regular Batch. The Early Batch entails a pre-interview, Management Admission Test, and Interview, while the Regular Batch follows a process similar to postgraduate program entrance examinations, with candidates taking a preliminary exam followed by an interview assessing various aspects. Successful candidates receive conditional acceptance, completing additional steps before final admission. The concept of the early interview, where the interview precedes the written exam, aims to identify candidates with strong practical management abilities early on, aligning with the MBA program's emphasis on practical skills over academic knowledge. Early interviews hold significance for schools by enhancing brand influence, identifying high-quality candidates, and increasing interaction to support candidates' success. For candidates, early interviews offer more admission opportunities, a higher proportion of admission quotas, and lower admission score requirements, providing a pathway for candidates with practical skills to access MBA programs effectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the 7Ps marketing mix framework and its application to analyze the marketing strategy of Chinese MBA programs. The study focuses on seven key elements: product, price, promotion, place (distribution), participants, pre-approval interview, and physical evidence. Strategies proposed include strengthening curriculum development and brand construction to enhance product value, optimizing pricing policies, expanding physical and virtual channels, enriching promotion through personnel models and social media platforms, optimizing personnel strategies, leveraging pre-approval interviews, and utilizing word-of-mouth promotion and tangible marketing materials.

In addition to the 7Ps framework, the paper discusses the variations in marketing mix proposed by scholars such as Ivy, Kotler and Keller, and Kishore Thomas John. Despite differences in the number of Ps and specific factors, all scholars emphasize the importance of product (program), price, and people. The paper suggests that elements like prominence and premiums could be considered under the product umbrella, while prospectus materials are part of tangible evidence in contemporary marketing.

Furthermore, the study proposes integrating early interviews as a significant component within the 7Ps marketing mix, highlighting their role in capturing potential students and enhancing admission chances. Additionally, it recommends integrating various promotional materials under the category of physical evidence to enhance marketing effectiveness.

In conclusion, this study introduces the 7Ps marketing framework and its application to student recruitment for master's programs. It lays the foundation for future research and provides valuable insights into effective marketing strategies for academic institutions. The paper demonstrates the potential for further quantitative research and case studies in this area, emphasizing the importance of marketing analysis skills in academic recruitment efforts.

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