

Empirical Study on Media Selection in University Marketing Based on Funnel Model

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Abstract—Higher education has entered the era of full competition, and the application of marketing theory in college enrollment has become a trend. It is of great significance to explore university marketing around the process of students' decision-making. Through in-depth interviews and questionnaires, this paper verifies that students' school choice behavior follows the marketing funnel model, and analyzes the effectiveness of different media in university marketing funnel, providing valuable data support and strategic suggestions for university marketing media selection.

Keywords—university marketing; funnel model; media selection; empirical study

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of university marketing originated in the 1970s, when the enrollment of American universities was at a low ebb. Universities used various methods to recruit students, and university marketing was born. With the enrollment expansion of Chinese universities in 1999, the reform of higher education system and the impact of China's accession to the WTO, some domestic scholars began to pay attention to the introduction of marketing theory into university management at the beginning of this century. They carried out more valuable expansion of university marketing theory and further demonstrated the applicability of marketing theory in higher education.

From the historical experience of the development of marketing, the establishment of market mechanism, the change of supply and demand and the intensification of competition are the internal motive force to promote the development of marketing. Nowadays, with the advance of the new college entrance examination reform, the development of new technology represented by Internet, big data and artificial intelligence, and the change of culture, China's higher education is about to enter the era of complete competition. And the first impact is the entrance of universities -- enrollment. Therefore, from a practical point of view, the application of marketing

theory in college enrollment will become a trend; from a theoretical point of view, the study of university marketing theory has once again become a topic of concern to scholars.

II. FUNNEL MODEL IN UNIVERSITY MARKETING

The development of technology and the intensification of competition in universities also lead to the change of demand points and communication channels of target groups. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore the marketing process of universities based on the decision-making process of students' choice of schools.

In order to solve this problem, this study collected data through questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews for freshmen in A University. A total of 2867 valid questionnaires were collected and 50 people were interviewed in-depth. Through the data collection of media and channel preference, this paper analyzes the influence of different media on students' decision-making in different stages of the decision-making process of choosing universities, and then combs the decision-making process of choosing universities through in-depth interviews, and further verifies the results of the questionnaire survey. It provides valuable data support for media selection strategy in university marketing.

Through the in-depth investigation, it is concluded that students' decision-making is composed of five sub-processes: knowing, arousing interest, deeply understanding, evaluating and finally deciding, which means that there is also a marketing funnel model in University marketing. Funnel model was put forward in the early 1980s. It was originally a system model for planning and control in production system. It was widely used in the marketing field, and then a marketing funnel model was proposed. The marketing funnel model reflects that from arousing customer's concern to finally producing purchasing behavior is just like a funnel, each link of the customer is gradually reducing, and only a small part of the final purchase formation transformation.

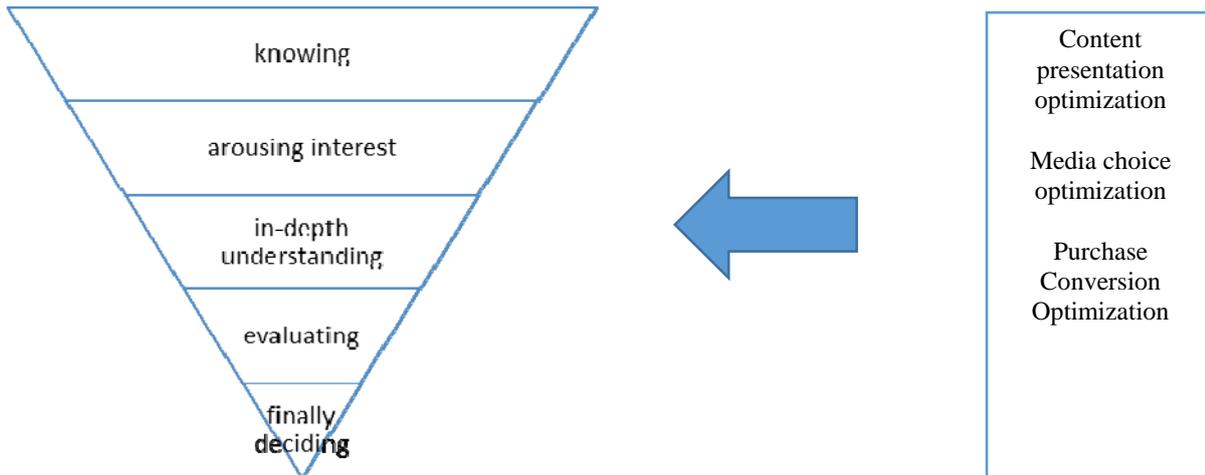


FIGURE I. FUNNEL MODEL IN UNIVERSITY MARKETING

III. EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT MEDIA IN MARKETING FUNNEL OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

For colleges and universities, content presentation optimization and media selection optimization in the marketing funnel process can effectively improve the conversion rate, and then enhance the enrollment performance. However, in today's media diversification, how to choose the matching media to formulate university marketing optimization strategy is an urgent problem to be solved in reality.

A. Knowing Stage to Arousing Interest Stage

Through question, "what media did you first know about your favorite school?" Analyze the effectiveness of various media from knowing stage to interested stage. The results show that the professional journals of the examination institute have an absolute advantage, accounting for 36.4%; followed by parents and friends recommendation, accounting for 20.07%; the third is their classmates or elder siblings, accounting for 17.5%. The total ratio of the three above is 74%. Other media, such as network media, high school teachers, recruitment consultation conference, University rankings, experts, etc. play a very limited role in students' first awareness of this stage of interest.

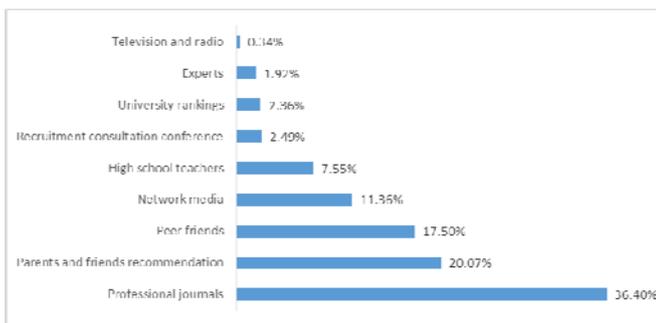


FIGURE II. MEDIA FOR THE FIRST TIME IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Because the time for students to choose a university is limited, so in the university marketing for students, the

important characteristic distinguished from others is the strong timeliness. According to the preliminary survey, the number of students who started to understand the University during the application period and the preparation period accounted for more than 60%. Therefore, choosing high-efficient media to let students quickly recognize the school is the primary link of university marketing, and the professional media of the examination institute can cover the most multi-objective groups in the shortest time, and mainly journals, is the best choice for universities to show the school to the target groups for the first time.

B. Arousing Interest Stage to In-depth Understanding Stage

When students are interested in a university, they will learn more about it according to their own needs. But in the era of media diversification, what media do students prefer to? Questionnaire survey shows that 34.3% of the students choose Internet search, that is, to understand the university through third-party evaluation; 23.7% of the students choose the official website of the university, even in the mobile Internet era, the authority of the official website in the eyes of students cannot be ignored; the third is the introduction of relatives and friends, accounting for 12.7%. The above three accounted for 70.7%, of which nearly 60% students preferred to understand the university through the network. At this stage, students are more likely to search for university information through authoritative, content-rich media.

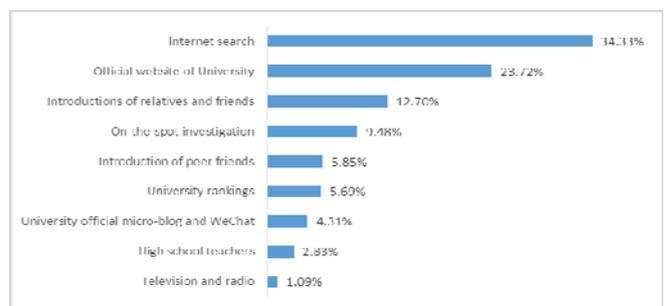


FIGURE III. AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITY MEDIA PREFERENCES

Previous follow-up survey shows that the factors of students' concern about universities are relatively stable, showing a variety of overall distribution situation. The factors of concern are teachers' level, employment prospects, professional settings, hardware facilities, accommodation and school atmosphere. Therefore, in the second stage of University marketing, from the stage of interest to the stage of in-depth understanding, we should focus on strengthening the construction of University official website, improve the richness of content, and do a good job of network evaluation supervision and crisis public relations plan.

C. In-depth Understanding Stage to Evaluating Stage

Through in-depth interviews, students in this stage through a variety of consulting methods combined with network evaluation, to form their own evaluation of the college entrance examination; therefore, we set up three related questions in the questionnaire to verify.

1) The most helpful medium for in-depth understanding University

The most helpful medium is often the medium that has a greater influence on students. Questionnaire analysis shows that: the most helpful to in-depth understanding of the media rankings of colleges and universities, network evaluation ranked second, second only to the official website of the university, and higher than the professional journals of the examination institute.

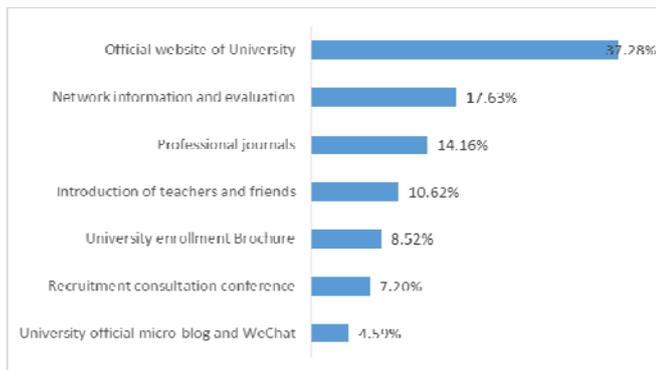


FIGURE IV. HELPFUL MEDIA FOR IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITY

2) Internet media with the highest degree of trust and contact in University selection process

In the second question, we refine the network media to further analyze students' trust in and contact with the network media. The data show that the network media is more decentralized, but after classification, Baidu Search and Baidu Post Bar as the representative of the third-party evaluation ranked the highest, its total proportion as high as 31.23%, higher than the official website of the examination institute, but also higher than the university's self-Media portfolio.

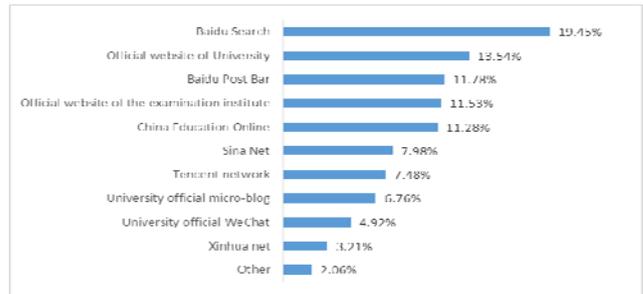


FIGURE V. NETWORK MEDIA'S CONTACT RATE AND TRUST PREFERENCE

3) Favorite way of consulting in University choice

The third question, through the refinement of the consultation method, once again verified the students' trust in third-party evaluation. Chinese interactive quiz platform - Baidu knows ranking is the first. At the same time, although the official website of the examination institute is far lower than the official website of the University in the rate of contact and trust, but in the preference survey of the way of consulting, the difference between the examination institute consulting platform and the University consulting platform is significantly reduced, indicating that students want to be evaluated by the authority.

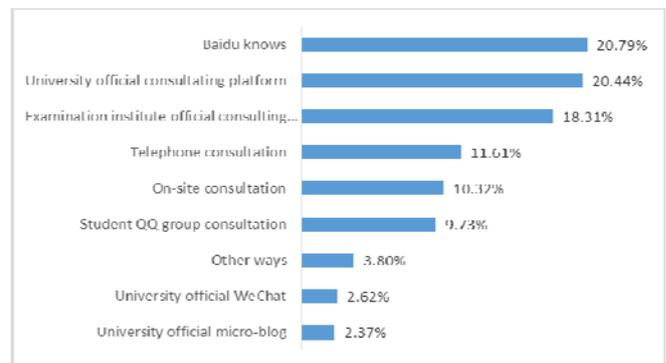


FIGURE VI. COUNSELING PREFERENCE

Through the mutual validation of the above three questions, in this stage, students gradually form their own evaluation system for universities through the collection of official information, as well as the combing of third-party evaluation and authoritative agency evaluation.

D. Evaluating Stage to Finally Deciding Stage

Through in-depth interviews, it shows that university selection is a complex group decision for students. Before the final decision, students have formed a preliminary evaluation of the university, but still will be further validated in the school selection decision-making group before making the final decision.

Decision-making groups include parents, relatives and friends, university teachers or admission teachers, high school teachers, peers and friends, and experts. According to the survey results, parents are still the final decision-makers, followed by their peers' friends and University teachers, then high school

teachers, and then the opinions of relatives. In recent years, the influence of expert opinions has also shown an upward trend.

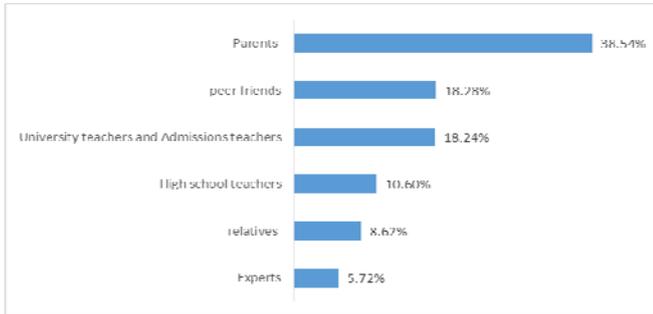


FIGURE VII. UNIVERSITY CHOICE DECISION-MAKING GROUP

IV. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

A. Main Conclusions

In the marketing funnel model of colleges and universities, according to the survey results, the most effective media are the official media of the examination institute and senior recommendation from the stage of awareness to the stage of interest generation;

From the stage of interest to the stage of in-depth understanding, Web search and the official website of universities have the greatest influence and are the main sources of information collection. From the in-depth understanding to the evaluation stage, the evaluation of alumni and authoritative organizations on the third-party evaluation platform is the most trusted. Finally, from the evaluation to the formation of the decision-making stage, through parents, peers, friends and University professionals to verify the opinions of the final choice of University decision.

In different stages of the marketing funnel model, universities should select different media to promote according to the students' media preference at different time nodes, in order to effectively transform the potential target groups into effective groups and maximize the marketing performance of universities.

B. Limitations

This study also has some limitations. The object of this study is the freshmen from the same university in Chengdu. Due to the objective factors such as the level of the school, fees, geographical location, etc., the target population will have a more homogeneous choice, so the conclusion has a certain scope of application.

Finally, the fundamental goal of marketing in Colleges and universities is to establish school brands and promote healthy development of schools. At the same time, in the era of more transparent information, the trend shows that third-party evaluation will gradually become the most trusted media channel for the target group in the choice of universities. Therefore, the basis of university marketing is still through professional education services to effectively enhance the core competitiveness of the school itself.

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