Impact of Service Marketing Mix Factors on Chinese Parents' Selection Decision on After-school Mathematics Tutorial School for Senior High School Students in Kunming City, China

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Abstract

This study investigates the influences of service marketing mix factors on Chinese parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses, namely course/curriculum, quality of the schools and program, tuition fee, location and online supplement, advertising, sales promotion, word of mouth and personal selling, administrative staff, teaching staff and current and former students, management processes, teaching processes, and enrollment processes and physical infrastructure and supporting evidence. This research used a quantitative design by developing questionnaires to collect data through the snowball sampling approach from 400 parents of senior high school students who are currently learning mathematics at tutorial schools in Kunming, China.

The results of this study reveal that course and quality of school, online supplement, sales promotion, teachers, administrative staff and current/former students have a significantly positive effect on parents' selection decision. Meanwhile, tuition fee was negatively related to parents' selection decision. Besides, course played the most important role in influencing parents' selection decision than any other factors, followed by teachers, administrative staff, current/former students, and online supplements, quality of the school, sales promotion and tuition fees. However, process and physical evidence these two factors have no effect on parents' selection decision.

Keywords: China. Marketing Mix Factors, Mathematics Tutorial School, Parents' Selection Decision, Senior High Students,

Introduction

Private tutorial school business is becoming common places for students at every level to take extra courses after regular courses at their schools. Lots of Chinese parents choose extra-curricular tutoring for their children from kindergarten or primary school. This is because there is a saying among Chinese parents, "never let the kids lose at the starting line", lots of parents let their children attend various tutorial classes to broaden their courses and let them "take the lead" (Lubienski, 2005). And the other social value in China is "All are

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inferior, only education high". More and more Chinese parents believe that knowledge is power which could help their children change fates and lead better lives in the future. This makes education play a quite important role in Chinese culture. Due to the high academic pressure and expectations on children, hoping that they will have better exam results to ensure that children will enter the famous universities, many parents turn to extracurricular tutoring for their children. Meanwhile, the increase in disposable income and a better educational background promote the likelihood that parents are willing to pay for higher tuition fees. According to the extracurricular tutoring industry report (2016), 137 million students (both elementary and secondary school) participate in extracurricular tutorial schools in China. The report shows that since the 1990s, the extracurricular tutoring business in primary and secondary schools in China has developed rapidly due to the growing recognition and demand of parents for tutoring. The profit of tutoring industry is increasing year by year, and the scale of this industry is expanding, so the market space of this industry is still huge.

There are approximately 3,600 tutorial schools in Kunming city at present from 2,049 in 2009. The numbers of tutorial schools demonstrate the extraordinary growth rate in the number of tutorial schools in Yunnan to meet the demand of the market. Facing such huge amount of schools, one of the key challenges for parents is how to select a suitable tutorial school for children. How to make the right selection decision is one of the key challenges, especially when parents' lack of expertise and the schools look very similar in their products and services.

Research Objectives

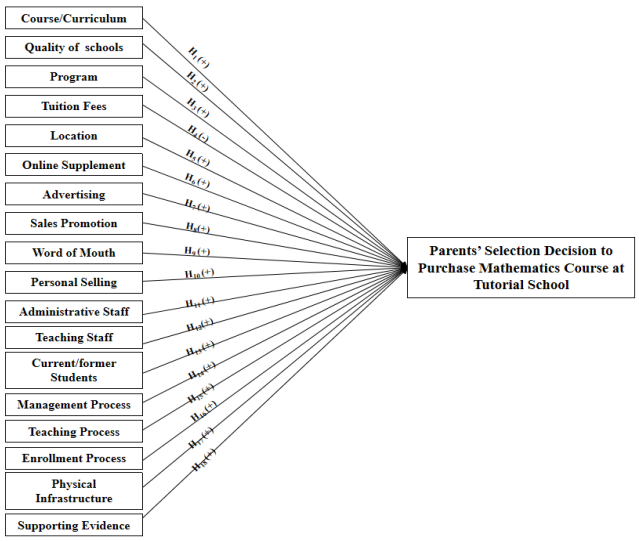
1. To identify the key service marketing mix factors that influence parents' selection decisions on tutorial schools for extra mathematics courses in Kunming City, China.
2. To examine how each of the factor influence parents' selection decisions on tutorial schools for extra mathematics courses in Kunming City, China.

Literature Review

For educational services, Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2006) stated that 7Ps concept is more suitable for the service industry. Maringe and Foskett (2002) argued that the consideration factors of parents to select an appropriate tutorial school for their children are complex and nerve-wracking because they may consider many factors without summarizing, categorizing, and ranking. As a result, most parents are more likely to make wrong decisions and miss the opportunity for selecting a suitable tutorial school. To compare the 7Ps of Booms and Bitner (1981) with 4Ps of McCarthy (1964), the former is more likely chosen to analyze the marketing mix in the service industry. Consequently, based on the purpose, this research selected Service Marketing Mix (7Ps) factors as the independent variables, which gives more dimensions than the 4Ps, to test the influence factors on Chinese parents' selection decision on after-school mathematics tutorial school for senior high students in

Kunming, China. Therefore, building on the theory of marketing mix (Booms & Bitner 1981), we assume that the marketing mix affect parents' selection decision on the tutorial school course. In the present research, drawing on previous research on the selection of tutorial school courses, we focus on the 7Ps marketing mix as our theory basis instead of 4Ps. The conceptual framework is stated in Figure 1.

Figure 1- The Conceptual Framework



Course/Curriculum

The core product of a tutoring school is its course or curriculum which students learn extra or special knowledge after regular school time. The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. There are various courses provided at tutoring schools including language, mathematics, science, music, painting, etc. With the increasingly fierce competition in the tutoring industry, tutorial schools need focus on excellent tutorial courses to get a competitive advantage. Li and Hung (2009) noted that most private tutorial schools provide similar services to their customers. In other words, to attract students and parents to choose their courses, tutorial schools must have unique advantages. For example, innovative courses and syllabuses can be a good selling point. A good course/curriculum allows tutorial schools and families to guide their expectations. No tutorial school could efficiently teach anything if there is no curriculum in place to meet the needs and abilities of all the students attending. Mamta (2013) mentioned that curriculum is an important and integral part of education which has direct or indirect impact on students' interests and ideas. Thus, course/ curriculum provided by tutorial schools play a major role in attracting students and parents to attend tutorial schools.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between course/curriculum and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Quality of the schools

Another aspect of private tutorial schools that attracts students and parents is the quality of the schools. The quality of services of a tutorial school is ultimately determined by whether and to what extent the students have learning experiences and achieve learning results that allow them to form an identify and feeling of self-worth, and to develop subject-based, social and personal competences for active participation in society, both at work and in their private lives. The quality of learning experiences and of the results of school activity can be seen in the competences of the students (Shupe, 2009). The students acquire the personal competences described in the

educational standards and curricula. Diverse methods and learning arrangements are used in tutorial schools to build up knowledge and competences; they are aligned to learning results, teaching objectives and contents. Based on its students' performance and achievements, customers know the quality of this school well. Based on the quality of the school is rather an important element in the buying process of the consumer, tutorial school managers should particularly pay attention to it so that to attract more audience, thereby gaining a competitive advantage (Shupe, 2009). So, for a tutorial school, the quality of the schools as the second product can heavily affect the selection decisions of parents and students.

H_2: There is a significant relationship between the quality of the schools and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Program

The program is the third basic element of product in private tutorial schools. It is important for private tutorial schools to develop programs like primary school, middle school or high school programs that satisfy different level students. Program is a vital part of private tutorial schools to make outstanding from competitors (Sujit, Sansgiry, Monali, & Kavita, 2006), including general program, VIP program, different-level subject program, etc. Wagner and Fard (2009) held that an appropriate program in tutorial school should be appropriately designed, developed, tested and revised. The professional services provided by tutorial schools are impossible for customers to check before purchasing, so this is a challenge for them (Mamta, 2013). In other words, the effects of the educational program could only be effectively evaluated after experiencing (Soutar & Turner, 2002). Only after students purchase programs can their assessment of the quality of the program be credible. Based on the above discussions, the researcher put forward the third hypotheses:

H_3: There is a significant relationship between program and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Tuition Fee

Kotler and Armstrong (2000) explained that price is the amount of money charged for a product or service or the value that consumers are willing to exchange for the benefits of the product or service. Kotler and Fox (1995) find that consumers will regard price as an important factor, which can change their purchase intention. Thus, price is a very crucial factor for customers to take into account. For a tutoring school, the price can apply to tutor fees up to courses, locations, qualifications of the teachers, and levels of knowledge. This is because the value perceived by the customer is much greater. So, in a tutorial school, the price could be tuition fees consisting of diversity and benefits offering. Besides, the price can greatly impact on the final decision of parents, because most customers care about the cost of attending tutorial schools (Alipour, 2012). Thus, if the tuition fees of a tutorial school match its returns, parents, and students would accept the price of the tutorial school. The price factor has a great influence on parents' choice of an educational institution and their view on the educational services offered (Alam, 2008). Based on the above literature, the fourth

hypothesis was forward as stated below:

H_4: There is a significant relationship between price factors (tuition fee) and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Location

In the context of education services, the place is where the tutorial school is located. The location of the school is more or less preference in determining the choice. A location, convenient and easy to reach will be the main attraction (Maringe, & Foskett, 2002). The place in the education service is a combination of location and decision on the distribution channel. For tutorial schools, the quality of location is crucial to the development of schools, since most students attend a class every week (Moogan & Baron, 2003). These locations may be close to large business areas or residential areas. The distance and the availability of tutorial schools have a far-reaching impact on market competitiveness and market share. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) proved a tutorial school place is a benefit to save the time of their home or their business location; people are likely to visit a tutorial school because it is close to their work. The place is an element to sustain competitive advantage easy to purchase and reach marketing targets. Cubillo, Sánchez, and Cerviño (2006) mentioned that location has been identified as a major factor affecting consumer's choices in the service industry such as food restaurants or tutorial school which influencing consumer intention to purchase. Dawes and Brown (2002) explained the place element is affecting consumer satisfaction to boost repeat purchases.

H_5: There is a significant relationship between location and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Online Supplement

The development of new technologies offers choices for the educational industry, and the place is not limited to geographical location. Information on products can be widely distributed through the Internet which is a type of distribution channel that helps tutorial schools effectively transfer knowledge to students while reducing investment costs (Cubillo et al., 2006). This view is supported by Chew et al. (2012), who argue that with the introduction of the Internet, the concept of channels has changed completely because organizations could sell more products to different geographic markets and meanwhile customers can get more convenience. The tutorial school could adopt online supplements to give students easy access to services wherever they want to. Currently, many tutorial schools are adopting the online-class program, which offers a better choice for students who find it difficult to attend class due to the limitation of location or time. Therefore, the place is variable purchasing behavior on customer satisfaction, and place could be an important influence factor in the choice making stage of decision making. In this respect, the next two hypotheses were forward as stated below:

H_6: There is a significant relationship between the online supplement and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Advertising Promotional activities that can be done is by way of advertising through the media TV, radio, newspapers, bulletins, leaflets, letters, brochures and others. A tutorial school could advertise on the websites related to the location of the school. It could also mean directly advertising to existing students, using social media like We-chat, QQ program and Facebook or press releases. Holme, Carkhum, and Rangel (2013) suggests that advertising is so far the best tool to increase public awareness of both existing and new products as it can communicate through mass media with a vast number of people. Tutorial schools may use advertising to create a positive brand image and attract the attention of students/ parents and then remind them to make a purchase and repurchase. Among the various elements of advertisement, the brochure is the most common way to advertise tutorial schools (Kittle & Ciba, 2001). Besides, online advertising is also a very popular way of publicity (Ivy, 2008). A tutorial school could advertise in the site where the target customer groups often focus on, which can deepen the penetration of the brand in the consumer groups, on the one hand, meanwhile, it can help tutorial schools and consumers to reach a consensus on values so that consumers could have brand awareness and resonance before they directly contact with the brand and related products and services (Holme et al., 2013). Therefore, tutorial schools could improve the accuracy, timeliness, and friendliness of their official website information to establish an effective network media which also helps them to establish a good network reputation.

H_7: There is a significant relationship between advertising and parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses.

Sales Promotion

Moreover, sales promotion can also be done through educational exhibitions, making direct contact with prospective students and conducting community relations activities. Or, membership programs, discounts, trial courses are always used to promote the schools. In many cases, the tutorial school uses necessary sale promotions such as coupons, discounts, rebates, and samples. These benefits offered to consumers through promotions influence their purchasing behavior and decisions (Jaafar, et al. 2012). Kasman and Loeb (2013) point out that sales promotion is a good communication tool to attract the attention of the customer, which greatly influence purchasing behavior. According to Keller and Lehmann (2003), sales promotion could help maintain a positive relationship with customer retention and have significant bargaining power ahead of any purchase decision (Kennedy, 2014). Parents and students always have choices among alternative schools, so sales promotions offered by tutorial schools, such as price cuts; largely encourage them to make the final purchase decision (Jaafar, et al. 2012). Trial course, for instance, is a kind of popular and effective ways among variable tutorial schools in the market to attract students and try to catch their interest to purchase the course. The possibility that students desire to choose this school will increase after they tried and experienced its course (Mattila, 2001). Meanwhile, gifts or discounts on tuition are also often used by tutorial schools to encourage students

and parents to have an immediate response regarding the purchasing decision.

H_8: There is a significant relationship between sales promotion and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Word of Mouth

Another very important and perhaps the most efficient and effective way of promoting the tutorial school is word of mouth. This type demands no extra cost, as it depends entirely on pleasing customers with this school itself. If parents and students are satisfied, they would recommend this tutorial school to their friends, relatives, and classmates. Nielsen (2012) mentioned that 92 percent of people believe recommendations from friends and family beat any other type of advertisement. Nguyen and Leblanc (2001a) concluded that the image of products/services would be affected by positive word of mouth while negative word of mouth could have undesirable effects. Good word of mouth could create a favorable tutorial school image. Ahmad (2011) stated that word of mouth has a great influence on the school; it affects the customer's purchase decision. It plays an important role in shaping individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards products and services they might buy and the effects of attitudes would not be only in the current period, but also in the future (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001b). Hence, tutorial schools encourage word-of-mouth marketing by providing good service and exclusive information to parents and students.

H_9: There is a significant relationship between word of mouth and parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses.

Personal Selling

Personal selling is the effective communication process of presenting the products to the customer by the staff to make sales and create relationships between customers and sellers (Mamta, 2013). It is face-to-face communication. Chaidaecha and Roongrattanakool (2015) believe tutorial schools should provide personal selling marketing to let students know in more detail what services they offer for students. For a tutorial school, face-to-face communication enables students and parents to fully understand what the tutorial school offers and make a proper buying decision, which in turn helps the tutorial school further clarify the needs of its customers, thus making it easier to persuade customers to make purchase decisions (Cubillo et al., 2006). Lee (2004) found customer purchase decision was affected greatly by the credibility of sales staff, their commitment to promises, patience, attitude, negotiation skills, and external appearance. They also could provide customers with relevant information to attract them so it is a rather effective factor in building contact between tutorial school and customers. Meanwhile, it contributes to creating an excellent image for the tutorial school (Machin & Murphy, 2010). As a result, the next fourth hypotheses are proposed as follows

H_{10}: There is a significant relationship between personal selling and parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses.

Administration Staff

In any service organization, administration staffs play crucial roles in the image, first contact point, and support to the consumers which the tutorial schools are no exception (Diaconu & Pandelicã, 2011). The staff will be the first group of people in the tutorial schools who first contact with the students or their parents. Since the first impression is very important for the decision-making in service businesses, the tutorial schools' administration staff must be the persons who have good interpersonal relationship skills and full of service-minded. The well-trained and good personality will impress the prospective students and parents which later will lead to a positive image and may result in decision making. (Gilaninia,Taleghani & Azizi, 2013). Govan, Patrick, and Yen (2006) suggest that the more training, learning, advising, and communications the staffs received, the better services they could provide to the prospective clients, and those services they provided would create the high value of services for the tutorial schools. The Institute also suggests the schools' administrators provide appropriate training to the administration staff also to create work motivate packages for the staff to encourage their motivation (Chew et al., 2012).

H_{11}: There is a significant relationship between administrative staff and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Teaching Staff

Another important group of people involved in the tutorial schools is teaching members or teachers. Many tutorial schools become famous because of their teachers who have high skills in knowledge delivery. One success key factor for the after-school tutorial is to have the right teachers who have knowledge, experience, delivery skills, and a good manner. Teachers who teach should be following their respective fields so that students can receive knowledge and understand it Mamta (2013) revealed that most parents expect teachers' teaching skills and approaches would lead students to learn, understanding, and receiving knowledge. Ladd and Fiske (2003) proposed that quite a number of parents believe that the positive relationship between school and students is mainly achieved by encouraging students' positive learning motivation through teachers' high-quality teaching, thus affecting students' academic performance. So, an attractive school cannot do without teachers, especially high-quality teachers. From the ground of service characteristics, the service quality depends heavily on the service providers, teachers in tutorial school as service providers in a unit of service business must have the knowledge, delivery skills, and good interpersonal relationship with their clients (students and parents). Thus, the teacher with those qualifications would impress the clients and finally influence on their decision and satisfaction.

H_{12}: There is a significant relationship between teaching staff and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Current and Former Students (WOM)

People factor includes current and former students as well for a tutorial school. Potential students and parents usually attach great importance to opinions of current and former students about tutorial schools they attended. Sometimes, a good evaluation will

directly promote the final purchase of parents, while a bad evaluation will make parents stop considering to choose this tutorial school for their children (Chand, 2016). Hausman and Goldring (2000) also mentioned that current students' views and behavior in tutorial school influence prospective customers due to they have studying experience and suggestions that is trustworthy. These comments will directly affect the word of mouth of tutorial school. As mentioned before, word of mouth plays a crucial role in parents' decisions so these comments as a way of spreading word of mouth have a great impact on customer selection decisions. Also, those current students who got a huge improvement in academic performance after attending one tutorial school will attract and have a deep influence on potential students' and parents' selection decisions on tutorial school (Ivy, 2008). Hence,

H_{13}: There is a significant relationship between current and former students and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Management Processes

The key management processes for a tutoring school include the activities that happen from when a student call or use social media to contact the school and ask for information of the courses, tutoring fees, come to try a trial course, students' waiting time to apply for the courses, and attend regular classes. These activities will have a unique and formal process associated with them designed to delight the students. All the administrative systems should be implemented quickly and efficiently to ensure the highest level of students' and parents' satisfaction. Ali, Ilyas, and Rehman (2016) mentioned that the speed of the process has a significant impact on customer perceptions and decisions on the organization. In order to reduce these negative impacts, tutorial schools need to improve their delivery system of service to provide fast and efficient service for parents. The management process begins with the consumer entering until to get out of the company. In short, the good operation of these management systems will play a crucial supporting role in the success of service marketing in tutorial schools.

H_{14}: There is a significant relationship between management processes and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Teaching Processes

Ivy and Naude (2004) mentioned that teaching method and the evaluating system as a major part of teaching processes which used to be considered as the main factor by parents and students for making the final choosing decision. A good teaching process can not only meet the students' personalized time but meet the requirements of the curriculum as well. Alipour (2012) deemed that a complete and mature teaching process system is the premise of running a successful cram school. All teaching methods, working forms, and every means of work should follow its process exactly. Otherwise, the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning process will be reduced, because of the differences in teachers' teaching skills, managers' personalities, and students' comprehension. Therefore, it would be productive for teachers to prepare the skills of methods, forms and means in the teaching

process to help students learn with quality (Bell & Rowley, 2002).

H_{15}: There is a significant relationship between teaching processes and parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses.

Enrollment Processes

The enrolment process can be considered as another major process factor in tutorial school. It includes the consultation reception process and the course cancellation process, etc. It is an important element in helping potential customers become customers (Beneke & Human, 2010). Customers tend to select simple and convenient ways of enrolling. The red tape and long waiting time will lead to customers' dissatisfaction, so the efficient enrollment process is not only conducive to win the favor of customers but also conducive to the management of the tutorial school (Mamta, 2013). Meanwhile, the serviceability and attitude of receptionists are also important in the enrollment process, which influenced parental decision making on choosing a school (Li & Hung, 2009), because all these processes are done by the staff. For tutoring schools, the process factors should be easy and convenient for parents and students to ensure their repeated purchase (Beneke & Human, 2010). Thus, based on the discussion above, the next three hypotheses about process were forward below:

H_{16}: There is a significant relationship between enrollment processes and parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses.

Physical Infrastructure

For a tutorial school, the physical evidence includes the customer service that students and parents received before, during and after the study. There are two kinds of physical evidence, firstly regarding the design and layout of physical infrastructure like building for classrooms, offices, library, activities field and other supporting facilities or furniture, equipment and technical infrastructure, etc. Zeithaml et al. (2006) mentioned that physical evidence is composed of the surroundings, conditions, spatial layout, functions, sign and artifacts for the decorations. The visual boards are passing the message of the service provider quickly to the customer with their first look. It always uses attractive and meaning full pictures to pass the information to the customer and create their intention to purchase the product or service. Mamta (2013) stated the physical evidence on the purchase decision is creating an image and to influence customer behavior. The image will, in turn, lead to customer to make a purchase decision as to the key sustainable competitive advantage.

H_{17}: There is a significant relationship between physical infrastructure and parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses.

Supporting Evidence

Secondly, supporting evidence, as the process of services to students, are teaching/learning materials, annual reports, calendars or school magazines, prospectus, and flyer these marketing materials, the company's website, Internet-Wi-Fi, cleanness and cozy environment and acceptable level of service, etc. Ivy and Naude (2004) stated that the environment in which the service is delivered can impact positive potential clients'

satisfaction. Since tutorial schools only provide teaching or intangible evidence to their students, the schools need to make service quality by providing supporting evidence. For a service business, such as tutorial schools, tangible could support intangible to communicate with their students and parents aiming to increase clients' satisfaction. The tutorial operators could make the environment where they deliver the tutorial education service to students to boost the students' satisfaction. Thus, physical facilities may be the first element of a tangible element of services that are evaluated by the consumers. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize in terms of physical evidence that

H18: There is a significant relationship between supporting evidence and parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses.

Methodology

This research is a quantitative design using questionnaire to collect data from 400 (Cochoran , 1977) parents of senior high school students who are currently studying mathematics tutoring courses at tutorial schools in Kunming City, Yunnan Province, China.

A web-based online survey was used to collect the data. Since the target respondents in this study belong to relatively hard-to-reach populations in Kunming, the snowball sampling technique was used to collect the data. The link of the online survey was first sent to a group of parents whose children are currently studying high school mathematics courses at tutorial schools from a local community. After completing the survey, they were asked to share the link with family members, friends or colleagues who met the requirements. In order to reduce bias from a large population, the survey instrument has a part of screening question at the beginning of questionnaire. A pilot testing of 40 samples was done before mass launch. 438 questionnaires were returned. After removing all the responses with invalid answers and data cleaning, 400 of these were deemed usable. After testing 400 samples, Cronbach's alpha of every factor is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As a result, the data is reliable to be used for the study.

Findings and Analysis

The results found more female respondents than males. This is most likely because generally women are decision-makers regarding children's issues and therefore tend to be the main respondents. The majority of the respondents are married, the age from 40 to 50 years old with a bachelor's degree background, and are employed with family monthly earnings between 9,000 to 12,999 RMB. This suggests that most middle income families could afford to send their children to tutorial schools. Besides, more than 30 percent of the respondents and 40 percent of their spouses worked as private company employees. Around 90 percent of the respondents had only one child in the family.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 1- Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.949[a]	.900	.896	.38386

Table 2- ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	521.244	18	28.958	196.527	.000
Residual	57.613	391	.147		
Total	578.857	409			

Table 3- Coefficients

Model	B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-.333		-1.048	.295
Course	.238	.267	7.370	.000***
Quality of School	.190	.110	3.898	.000***
Program	.052	.027	1.475	.141
Tuition Fee	-.077	-.035	-2.111	.035*
Location	.070	.072	1.468	.143
Online Supplement	.115	.126	3.392	.001**

Sales Promotion	.089	.043	2.250	.025*
Advertising	-.029	-.016	-.888	.375
Word of Mouth	-.016	-.009	-.481	.631
Personal Selling	.003	.001	.080	.936
Teaching Staffs	.179	.184	4.158	.000***
Administrative Staffs	.130	.134	3.003	.003**
Current/ Former Students	.119	.126	3.452	.001**
Management Process	-.006	-.006	-.116	.907
Teaching Process	.001	.001	.030	.976
Enrollment Process	.032	.035	.902	.368
Physical Infrastructure	-.024	-.025	-.597	.551
Supporting Evidence	-.008	-.008	-.173	.863

n = 400.

*Sig. <.05; **Sig. <.01; ***Sig. <.001

As Coefficients Table 3 shows, the course had a significant positive effect on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= .267, p<.001), which means that H1 was fully supported. In line with our hypothesis, quality of school was also found to generate a significant effect on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= .110, p<.001) in a positive way; Thus, H2 was fully supported. However, contrary to H3, the program did not have any significant effect on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= .027, p>.05). Hence, in terms of product factor, H1, H2 was accepted, but H3was rejected. With regard to H4, the results assert that tuition fees had a significant negative effect on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= -.035, p<.05). Therefore, H4 was accepted. Our results show that location had no impact on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= .072, p>.05). Thus, H5 failed to be supported. Concerning H6, the online supplement had a significant positive effect on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= .126, p<.01), which means that H3b was fully supported. So, as for place factor, H5 was rejected but H6 was supported. In support of H8, we find that sales promotion has a positive influence on parents' selection decisions on

tutorial mathematics courses (β= .043, p<.05). Different from H8, other three promotion factor including advertising, word of mouth and personal selling had no impact on parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses (Advertising: β= -.016, p>.05; Word of mouth: β= -.009, p>.05; Word of mouth: β=.001, p>.05). Therefore, H7, H9, and H10 were not supported.

The results also support hypothesis H11 as administrative staff had a positive influence on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= .134, p<.01). Similarly, a positive and significant relationship was also found between teaching staff and parents' selection decisions (β= .184, p<.001), supporting H12. Fully supporting H13, the results indicated a positive significant effect between current/former students and parents' selection decisions (β= .126, p<.01). Therefore, in terms of people factor, H11, H12, H13 were all supported. In contrast to people factor, process factor including management processes, teaching processes and enrollment processes these three variables were all found had no impact on parents' selection decision on tutorial mathematics courses (management processes: β= -.006, p>.05; teaching processes: β= .001, p>.05; enrollment processes: β=.035, p>.05). Therefore, H14, H15, and H16 were rejected. When H17 is examined, it is found that physical infrastructure had no impact on parents' selection decisions on tutorial mathematics courses (β= -.025, p>.05). Thus, H17 was rejected. As for H18, supporting evidence did not have any effect on parents' selection decisions either (β= -.008, p>.05), which means H18 was not supported. Therefore, as for the physical evidence factor, both H17 and H18 were rejected.

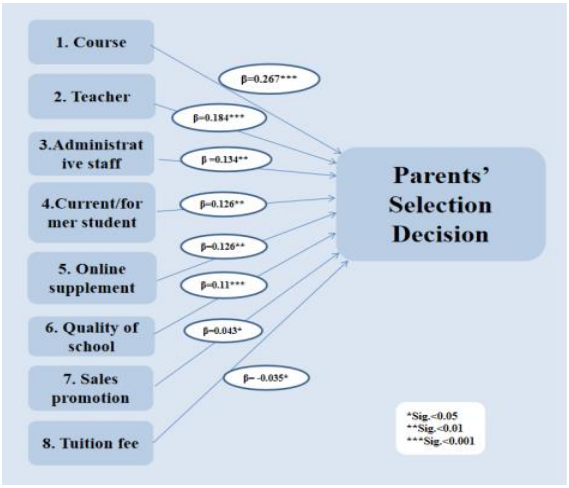


Figure 2- Final result of the influence of independent variables on parents' selection decision (n = 400)

Among these eight supported hypotheses, the beta coefficients suggested that course influence (β=0.267) was the most important contributor in explaining parents' selection decision, followed by teacher (β=0.184), administrative staffs (β=0.134), current/former students (β=0.126), online supplement (β=0.126), quality of school (β=0.11)

sales promotion (β=0.043) and tuition fee (β= -0.035). Also, from the beta coefficients, only the tuition fee this factor was negative significantly correlated with parents' selection decisions. The negative effect of the influence of tuition fees on parents' selection decisions suggested that the higher tuition fees in tutorial school, the less likely parents are to choose it. The result was shown in Figure 2.

Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the results, the most influential factor is the course. This result showed that parents prefer to select a mathematics tutorial course with high-quality. The results from this study agreed with the ideology from Kotler & Fox (1995) who said that the quality of the course and the academic performance of students after attending tutorial school. The authors revealed that the quality of the tutorial schools came from the potential students and parents' ideas, impression and attitudes toward those tutorial schools. Ivy (2008) added that the students and parents' attitude towards the tutorial schools is shaped by the quality of the course, the academic performance after attending the tutorial schools, etc. The results are also consistent with Goi (2009) who find significant relationships between the schools' quality of a course and clients' selection decision and Ahmed and Rahman (2015) who present that many students select the tutorial schools that are match to their academic ability and interests. Thus, the course as the most influential factor should be highly valued by the tutorial school.

The second most influential factor is teacher. From our research findings, most parents chose a tutorial course for their children because of teachers of the tutorial school (certification, teaching style, and skills, character, etc.). Most parents tend to choose a tutorial school that has capable teachers such as year-experience, qualifications, and knowledge. The parents perceive that highly qualified teachers could provide a better quality of teaching which is the most important to contribute to students' achievement. The results from present research are consistence with Drummond (2004) who presents that the students who are placed in the mathematic classes of highly effective teachers show significantly outperform when compare to other students. The author present that the parents also look for the kind-hearted teachers in the schools because they can communicate easily with the teachers when they face difficulty.

The third most influential factor is the administrative staff. The administrative function supports the teaching staff to keep the educational facilities running. Without administrative staff, the tutorial school cannot function effectively or efficiently. This reveals parents who believe factor administrative staff is quite important in their decision-making process when they consider one tutorial school. The result is consistent with previous studies (Mamta, 2013). This is because administrative staff could provide support and advice to parents most of the time and resolve the problems that students/parents encounter. All service support from the administrative staff at a tutorial school is regarded as the essential

factor which cannot be ignored.

Current/former students are another important factor for parents' selection decisions from this result. The review ratings of former students in the tutorial school, comments and suggestions from current students create both an image and awareness of parents' interest in a tutorial school. Parents are affected positively by this factor according to the result. Our result is consistent with the previous study that mentioned the review factor positively affects students' choice for a school (Bray, 2003). From our respondents in this study, most respondent's main source to get the information of the tutorial school is recommended by relatives and friends, which also indicated the reviews from others has a significant influence on parent' decision. Thus, current/former students play an important role in parents' selection decisions.

The study also reveals that online supplement is the fifth influential factor which could significantly have positive impact on parents' tutorial school selection decision. The schools can deliver the knowledge in the classrooms or online classes. From the results, the parents in Kunming, who participated in the study, preferred a tutorial school which has capacity to provide online classes for the convenience of the students. The results of the present study are consistent with the previous researchers including Price et al. (2003) and Cubillo et al. (2006), who particular pay attention to the place factors (distribution channel of Marketing's Mix), reveal the findings from their studies that online-class is important factor for the students' decision when they select the schools and now the online class courses are in high demand. To attract more customers, the services about online supplement aspect need to be enhanced.

The sixth most influential factor is quality of the school. In general, a school's quality comes from the outcome and reputation of the schools. The schools' outcomes and reputations are keys for the schools' brand image and appreciation. Cubillo et al. (2006) present that the quality of the school is one of major factors for decision-maker in selection of a school. The results also are consistent with Nora (2004) who finds that students concern on the institutions' quality education and learning outcome. In line with previous research, the results outline relationships between the quality of the school and parents' selection decisions. The results indicate that the quality of the school has a positive effect on parents' selection decisions. Mamta (2013) reveals that the high quality of a school can effectively wins parents' trust and affect their purchase decision. Thus, the quality of a school can be a powerful predictor of parents' willingness to choose a tutorial school for their children. (Prasongsook, 2010)

Sales promotion is another factor affects parents' selection decisions regarding the tutorial course they want their children to attend. The finding of sales promotion factors such as a discount for tuition fees or stay longer promotions, etc. have a positive impact on parents' selection decisions. Manzoor (2013) presented that the schools' sales promotion can help boosting the students and parents' recognition and exposure for the schools. Govan,

Patrick, and Yen (2006) revealed that people's attitudes are vary following personal levels and Kanjanawattanwong (2014) presented that some customers may connect sales promotion with poorer brand quality from their adversely influences brand evaluation. As a result, the school can gain better attitude which will lead to the good brand image.

The tuition fee is the eighth-most influential factor by significance. Tuition is relatively less important to parents' choice of a tutorial school compare with other variables. This factor has a negative impact on parent's selection decisions but the relationship is weak. This finding is inconsistent with prior research (Maringe, 2006; Ivy, 2008) on customer selection decisions which shows that the price was considered as the most crucial factor to attract students. Price is the second and third influential factor for Marine and Ivy, respectively. A possible reason that price is less influence in this research might be ascribed to the fact that more than most respondents in this study were parents who care much about the benefits of better grades after students attend a tutorial course. For their children to enjoy quality education, many parents think it is well worth to spend money on their children. Many parents of high school students in China are willing to invest in their children's education for the sake of their future no matter how much money they spend (Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, & Murthy, 2004). Therefore, they do not regard the tuition element too much when they choose a tutorial school. Another reason might that our respondents in this study have different cultural backgrounds and ideas from previous researches (Foondun & Raffick, 2002).

Overall, from the marketing mix perspective, this study investigates the influence of service marketing mix of tutorial school on parents' selection decisions. The findings of the current study have implications for tutorial schools that course, tuition fee, online supplement, sales promotion, teachers, administrative staffs and current/former students these eight marketing mix elements highly influence parents' selection, which is very important for tutorial school managers and marketers. If the tutorial school has competitive marketing strategies from these aspects, then it will strongly affect the selection decision of parents.

Implication of the study

The results of this study carry several important practical and theoretical implications. Firstly, the research provided an insight into the role of course towards a tutorial school for managers and marketers. The tutorial school operators and managers will have benefits from the research results, because they could get useful information about factors influencing parents 'selection decision and help tutorial school owners to identify and comprehend parents of senior high school students demand in Kunming, and as a result, they could develop effective marketing strategies to meet the needs of existing and potential customers, thus increasing their competitive advantage. Besides, the findings of the research could be used as a guideline by the tutorial owners and managers to improve their service.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this research provides data to support the role of marketing mix on parents' selection decisions upon the mathematics course of tutorial

school. Even though many researchers have studied the marketing mix of customer decisions for tutorial schools, those studies have not linked marketing mix factors to parents' selection in senior high school. For this reason, this research is different from earlier studies. Besides, there was no similar literature on marketing mix on choosing a mathematics tutorial course in China. This is the first time to investigate the influence of marketing mix upon senior high school students' parents' selection decisions on the mathematics course of tutorial school in Kunming, China. The result provides a wider angle to academic which can act as a reference for future researchers to dig deep into more details under the topic.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The current research focuses only on service marketing mix factors that influence the parents' selection decision of Kunming city. For future studies, the researchers who would like to do similar or same filed topic may do the research from different perspectives.

In this research, only the quantitative research method was adopted and all questions are closed-end questions. For future study, open opinions and suggestions from respondents are necessary to find more inputs on what would be the influence factors toward customer selection decisions.

The data are only limited to mathematics tutorial course selection. Future researchers might examine other different categories of tutorial school courses like arts, language, sports, etc.

The researcher only focused on respondents whose children studied in tutorial school and got tutorial experience at least once in Kunming, China. To obtain more variety and accurate results, the questionnaire could be distributed to other provinces to explore different geographical areas respondents. The next study could include more brands of tutorial schools out of Kunming City.

The study uses non-probability sampling method, rather than using probabilistic methods (i.e., random selection) to generate a sample, which might give biased findings due to limited group of the respondents based on their subjective judgments (Mercer, 2017). Researchers for next study should take it into consideration.

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