



Strategic Marketing Plan for Sparkle International English School

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The objectives of this research work are to learn how to make a strategic marketing plan and design a strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School. The strategic marketing plan is developed in order to help the Sparkle International English School to develop its business.</p> <p>I studied previous research and literature on the concept of internal analysis, external analysis, and SWOT analysis for the theoretical discussions of this research work. This research work also gathered and analyzed these related sources in order to find out what is needed in strategic marketing plan, and how to build a feasible strategic marketing plan.</p> <p>This Thesis uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. An interview and a questionnaire are the main data collection techniques in this research work. I interviewed two general managers of two English schools in Langfang in order to get information and learn from their experiences for the case company. I also distributed a questionnaire and sent 30 questionnaires to the students who are studying in the Sparkle International English School now. The theoretical framework discusses all the concepts concerning the strategic marketing plan.</p> <p>The result of this research work is a feasible strategic marketing plan in accordance with the analysis of the Sparkle International English School. The strategic marketing plan based on the five 'Ps' method. In addition, new strategies are created for the Sparkle International English School on the basis of this research.</p>	
Keywords: the Sparkle International English School, strategic marketing plan, analysis.	

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1 INTRODUCTION

With the development of the world economy and internationalization, there is an increasing amount of communications and cooperation between different countries. English is an international language, and a great number of people in many countries in the world speak English. Therefore, the popularity of English plays a vital role in the future development of a country.

Today, China is one of the largest economies in the world, and in order to promote the development of international and national exchanges, China should pay increased attention to English education. With the improvement of people's living standards and cultural quality, scores of Chinese people are also aware of the importance of English. Many parents want their children to learn English and a lot of Chinese students also are interested in learning English. Thus, lots of English schools have been built in China and these schools have a great market potential.

1.1 Background and Motivation

The Sparkle International English School was opened in August 2012. I am involved in the operations of this school in the position of a director of marketing. The School is located in Langfang, Hebei province, China. The main operation is English teaching for people of different ages. This school also has a consulting department for the students who want to go abroad and study. In the English teaching part, IELTS courses, TOEFL courses, and courses in English Speaking are included. In addition, the school also offers some professional English teaching, e.g. it provides services for the people who are working in an English department at a college, university or company and need to improve their English level. The Sparkle International English School also provides translation services. For the consulting part, the school will offer some information and

suggestions about studying abroad for students who want to go abroad. In addition, the school can help students who are preparing to go abroad and study by dealing with some documents, e.g. insurance, and visa.

I chose this topic because I want to find out how to make a strategic marketing plan for the English school. In this thesis, I make a complete strategic marketing plan for my case company. The region of my marketing plan is in Langfang city which this school is located in. It is possible for me to analyze the data because the economics and the education level is similar in the same city. In this thesis, I analyze my case company situation and the market trends for making a holistic strategic marketing plan.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The objectives of this research are to learn how to make a strategic marketing plan and design a strategic marketing plan for Sparkle International English School.

According to the objectives of this research, the research questions are as follows:

1. What is a strategic marketing plan?

The first sub question: What are main factors needed in the strategic marketing plan?

Literature and previous research is studied in order to find answers to this question.

2. How can a strategic marketing plan be made for Sparkle International English School?

The second sub question: What is the current market situation and the future market potential for the English school?

For this question, I will do a market research to analyze the situation of the market to answer this question. This analysis helps find out new methods to improve the competitiveness of the English school.

1.3 Research Methodology

In my research, my main research question is a 'How' question. Therefore, I will use qualitative research methods. "Qualitative marketing research seeks to explore and understand people's attitudes, perceptions, motivations and behaviors by constructing and then analyze data that are largely qualitative in nature" (Kent 2007, 86).

In this qualitative research, I interviewed two Chinese English schools' general managers to get information for this research. I also circulated 30 questionnaires among the students who are studying in the Sparkle International English School now.

1.4 Structure of the Study

This thesis is including 5 chapters. Chapter two is about literature review of strategic marketing plan. Chapter three focuses on the methodologies of the research. Chapter four describes the strategic marketing planning with a practical part. The last chapter includes the conclusions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

As was discussed in chapter one, the objectives of this thesis are to learn how to make a strategic marketing plan and design a strategic marketing plan for Sparkle International English School. Theoretical knowledge about strategic marketing plan is expounded. I also discuss the situation analysis, and it includes five parts, i.e. internal analysis, market analysis, customer analysis, competitor analysis, and SWOT analysis. In addition, a strategic marketing plan process is discussed.

2.1 Strategic Marketing Plan

I need to make a strategic marketing plan for the case company, and making the strategic marketing plan is in a central position in this research work. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the basic knowledge of strategic marketing plan. Alsem (2007, 6) points out that the definition of marketing is understood in different ways. First, as an organizational culture, marketing drives the organization to make a basic promise to serving the needs of customers. Second, as a strategy, define the target markets and product positioning. Third, as a tactics, marketing is the day-to-day activities of the four marketing tools: product development, pricing, distribution, and communication. “The marketing means that the achievement of corporate goals through meeting and exceeding customer needs better than the competition” (Jobber 1998, 4). Gilligan and Wilson (2003, 53) demonstrate strategy means organizations need to know where they want to go and then decide how best to get there. Strategic marketing can be interpreted to the planner deciding – with complete clarity – in which markets the organization wants to compete, and then how exactly it will do this. “Strategic marketing plan is typically applied to the definition of marketing objectives and achieve these objectives” (Gilligan & Wilson 2003, 43).

According to Kotler (2000, 86-89), strategic marketing plan can be understood as follows: based on the current market environment and opportunity to select the target market, design strategies and achieve marketing objectives. Furthermore, the process of strategic marketing plan includes internal analysis, market analysis, customer analysis, and competitor analysis. In addition, a strategic marketing plan should adapt to the changes of the market. Therefore, designing a useful strategic marketing plan will help the case company to develop their business.

2.2 Internal Analysis

Internal Analysis is the first step to build a strategic marketing plan, so the case company's current situation needs to be clarified. Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 99) point out that the goal of internal analysis is to identify organizational strengths, weaknesses, constraints, and ultimately, to develop strategies. In this research work, the internal analysis can provide a detailed understanding of the case company.

Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 99) point out that the internal analysis includes four aspects. The first, financial performance can provide an initial approximation. The second, an analysis of other performance element, i.e. customer satisfaction, product quality, brand association, relative cost, new products, and employee capability, can provide a link to future profitability. The third, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses and these can be the basis of current and future strategies. The fourth is an identification of the threats and opportunities in the company. The last section is to find out the relationship between strategy and the analysis of the organization, competitors and the market. (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 99.) "A successful strategy is when organization strengths match market needs and against with the competitor's weakness" (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 99).

According to Alsem (2007, 57), the internal analysis should start from objectives. Alsem (2007, 57) also point out that set an objective has numerous of functions. First, within the company it serves as a guideline for the company, so the company will know what they wants to achieve. Therefore, it has a communicative or motivating function. The second, it is a tool for the planning process. According to Gilligan and Wilson (2003, 312), there are four aspects influence on organizational objectives and strategy, i.e. external influences, organizational culture, nature of the business, individuals and groups. Alsem (2007, 57-58) also point out that an objective should have five requirements, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic and Timed. “Specific relates to being precise about what the company is going to achieve. Measurability means that it is possible to document whether the objective was achieved. Ambitious means that the objectives should not be set too low. Realistic means that the objective should be reasonably possible to achieve. The last, an objective should be defined for a specific time period.” (Alsem 2007, 57-58.)

2.3 Market Analysis

“The business market consists of all the organizations that acquire goods and services used in the production of other products or services that are sold, rented, or supplied to others” (Kotler 2000, 192). Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 60) also suggest that market analysis should be based on the customer and competitor analysis to make strategies about a market and its dynamics. According to Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 60), the first objective of a market analysis is to decide the attractiveness of a market to current and potential participants. Another objective of market analysis is to understand the dynamics of the market. “The business market consists of all the organizations that acquire goods and services used in the production of other products or services that are sold, rented, or supplied to others” (Kotler 2000, 192). Gilligan and Wilson (2003, 350) point out that there are five factors that can influence the market, i.e. Product, price, place, promotion, partnerships.

Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 61) point out that a market analysis will be decided by the context, and include the following dimensions: “Emerging submarket; actual and potential market and submarket size; market and submarket growth; market and submarket profitability; cost structure; distribution systems; trends and developments; key success factors” (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 61).

Market analysis is also a part of external analysis. Market analysis can help the case company to know the current market situation. Market analysis also can be guidance for creating a strategic marketing plan.

2.4 Customer Analysis

“In order to grow the profits and sales, the companies have to spend considerable time and resources searching for new customers”(Kotler 2000, 46). Alsem (2007, 73) points out that the creation of customer value must be a company’s central focus. This is the reason why the external analysis should start with an analysis of the target customer. “In most strategic marketing- planning contexts, the first logical step is to analysis the customers” (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 26). According to Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 26), the customer analysis can be usefully divided into three parts. The first one is market segments, the second one is customer motivations, and last one is unmet needs. Segmentation is the key to developing a competitive advantage. “Segmentation means it is the identification of customer groups that respond differently from other groups to competitive offerings” (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 26).

After identifying the customer segments, the next step is to consider the customer motivations. Thus, the customer motivation analysis is very important for the customer analysis. The process of customer motivation analysis illustrates in Figure 1. “The customer motivation analysis starts with the task of identifying motivations for a given

segment” (Aaker and McLoughlin 2010, 32).

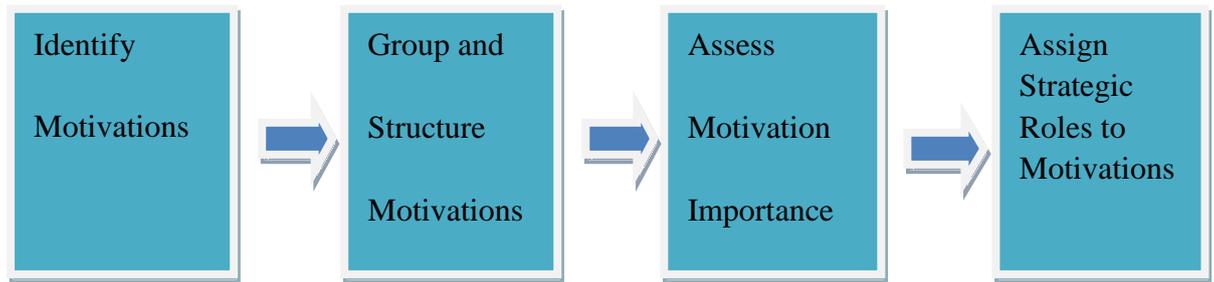


Figure 1. Customer Motivation Analysis (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 32)

“Qualitative research is the most powerful tool in understanding customer motivation, it can involve focus-group sessions, in-depth interviews, customer case studies, or ethnographic research. The concept is to search for the real motivations.” (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010, 34.) According to Alsem (2007, 79), A customer analysis, also called “market research”, the problem in market research is that it is difficult for people to indicate what the customer might like in the future. Thus, data from a customer analysis should not be used as a direct guideline for action, it should be interpreted and subsequently combined with other sources. (Alsem 2007, 79.) “ Marketing research is at the heart of marketing decision-making and it is important to understand what it involves and its place within the organization” (Brassington & Pettitt 2007, 141).

Alsem (2007, 99) also suggests the research phases, it illustrates in Figure 2.

In this research work, I use both qualitative and quantitative research as my research methods. More details can see from the next chapter. In sum, the customer is the one of the important roles in business. Therefore, companies must know what does customer needs and wants, then satisfied customers and develop new customers.

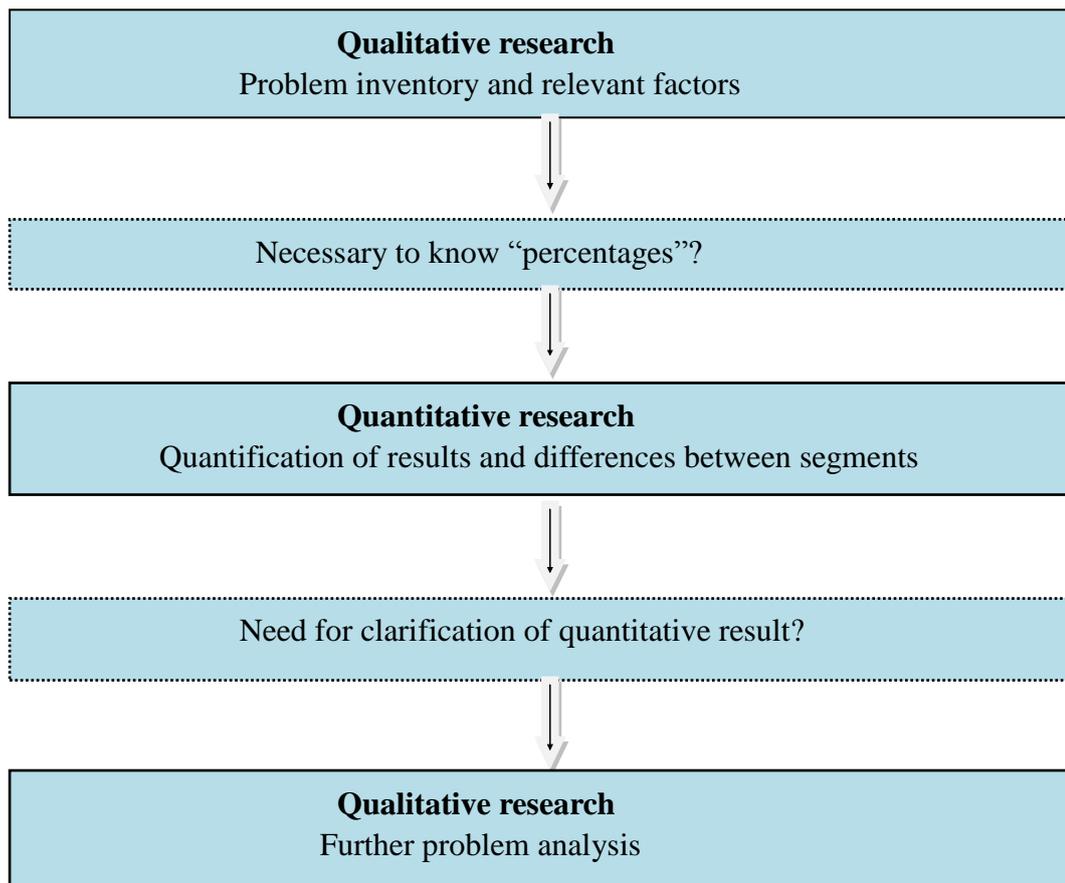


Figure 2. Research phases (Alsem 2007, 99)

2.5 Competitor Analysis

According to Aaker and McLoughlin (2012, 42), competitor analysis is the second element of external analysis, the goal of competitor analysis will influence the development of successful business strategies and the competitor analysis should focus on the identification of threats, opportunities. Moreover, strategic uncertainties should be created by competitor weaknesses, or strengths. (Aaker & McLoughlin 2012, 42.) "Competitive analysis should be a central element of the marketing planning process" (Gilligan and Wilson 2003, 177).

Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, 42) also point out that before doing a competitor analysis, researchers should start with identifying current and potential competitors. There are two different ways to identify the current competitors. The first way is to examine the perspective of the customer who needs to make choices among competitors. The second way attempts to place competitors in strategic groups. After competitors are identified, the focus turns to attempting to understand competitor and competitor strategies. (Aaker & McLoughlin 2012, 42.)

“The goal of a competitor analysis is to obtain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the most important competitors and their expected strategies” (Alsem 2007, 145). According to Alsem (2007, 134), the methods for identifying the competitors include competition-based methods and customer-based methods. In addition, competition-based methods include management opinion and strategic groups. Customer-based methods include direct identification research with customers, brand switching, and positioning research. (Alsem 2007, 134.)

2.6 SWOT Analysis

“The overall evaluation of a company’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is called SWOT analysis” Kotler (2000,76). “A SWOT analysis therefore is different from external and internal analyses that are being completed. Both of those analyses combined may be designated as the situation analysis.” (Alsem 2007, 174.) Gilligan and Wilson (2003, 88) also point out that SWOT analysis is one of the frequently used tools in the marketing planning process. The quality of the outcomes often suffers because of the relatively superficial mode in which it is conducted.

According to Gilligan and Wilson (2003, 89), SWOT analysis needs to achieve two objectives. The first, dividing useful data from the merely interesting. The other

objective is to find out what management must do and develop its distinctive competencies within each of the market segments. (Gilligan & Wilson 2003, 89.)

Figure 3 is the steps in the SWOT analysis (Alsem 2007, 177)

1. Only include the most important issues.
2. Category the points in order of importance.
3. Ensure that adequate supporting evidence is available for each point.
4. Strengths and weaknesses should be relative to the competitors.

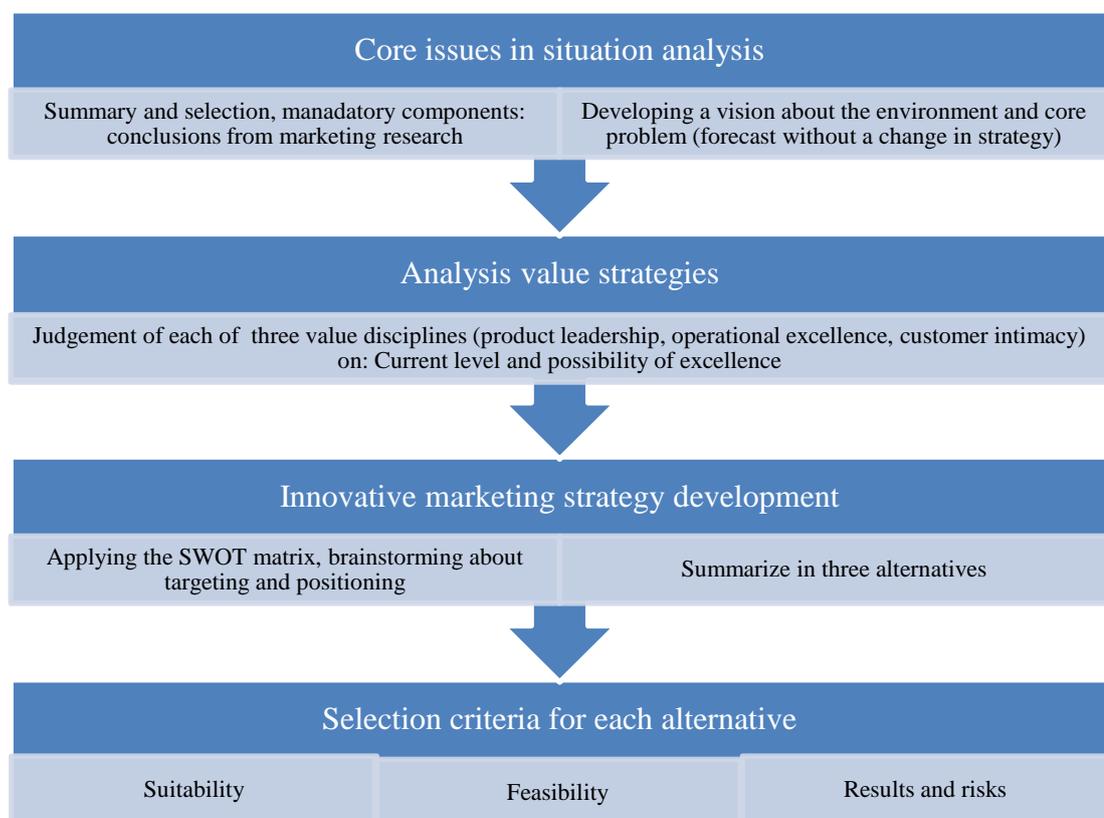


Figure 3. Steps in the SWOT analysis (Alsem 2007, 177)

“TOWS analysis can be seen to add another dimension to the traditional thinking about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, a fundamental question can be raised about just how useful this sort of analysis is within today’s markets” (Gilligan & Wilson 2003, 102).

<p style="text-align: center;">Internal Elements</p> <p>External Elements</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organizational Strengths</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organizational Weaknesses</p>
		Strategic options
<p>Environmental Opportunities (and risks)</p>	<p>S-O: Strengths can be used to capitalize or build upon existing or emerging opportunities</p>	<p>W-O: The strategies developed need to overcome organizational weaknesses if existing or emerging opportunities are to be exploited</p>
<p>Environmental Threats</p>	<p>S-T: Strengths in the organization can be used to minimize existing or emerging threats</p>	<p>W-T: The strategies pursued must minimize or overcome weaknesses and, as far as possible, cope with threats</p>

Figure 4. The TOWS matrix (adapted from Wehrich, 1982) (Gilligan & Wilson 2003, 102)

2.7 Strategic Marketing Plan Process

Gilligan and Wilson (2003, 61) point out that the planners should think about how to improve levels of commitment and support to the planning process. As figure 5 discussed:

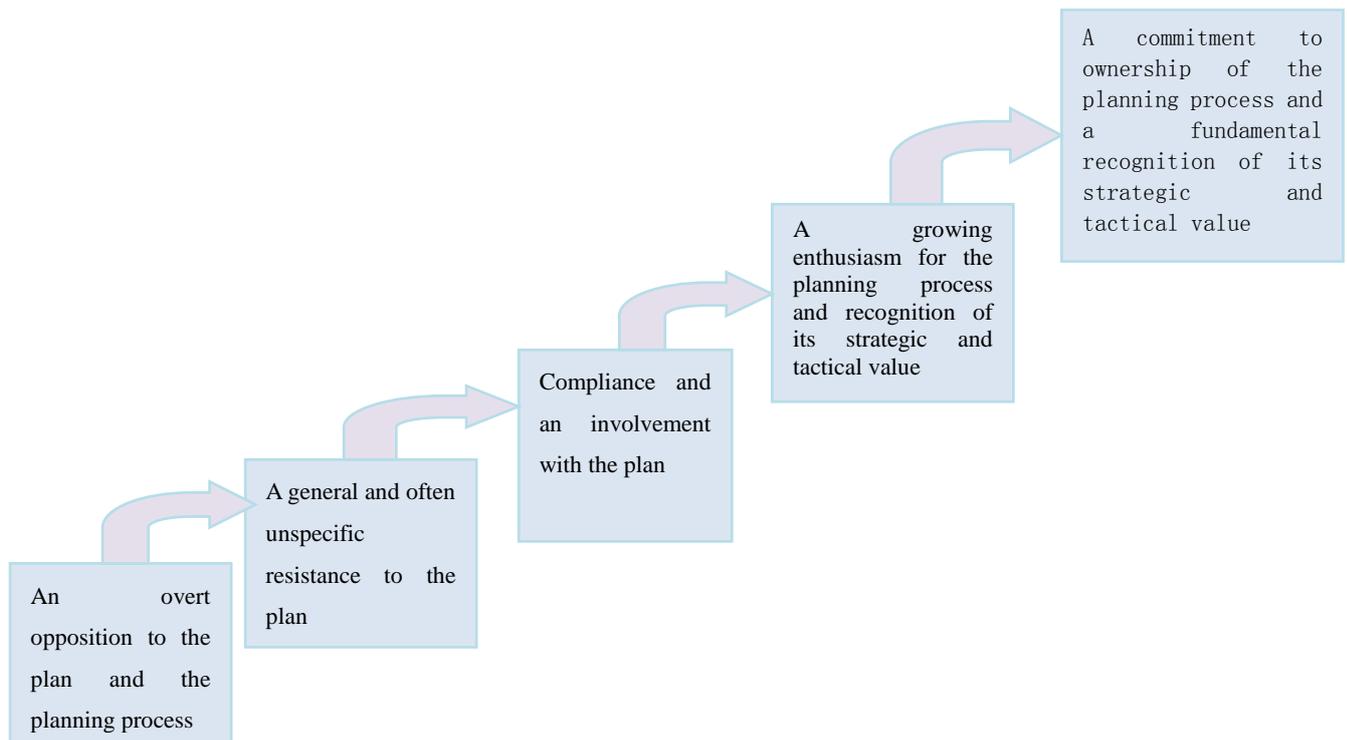


Figure 5. The ladder of planning commitment and support (Gilligan & Wilson 2003, 61)

Alsem (2007, 21) also point out that the strategic marketing planning process. The first, companies should know their mission, value, strategies, and market definition. The second, it includes internal analysis and external analysis. The third, the research should work from analysis to strategy. The fourth, corporate objectives and strategies together. The fifth, marketing objectives and marketing strategies. The last, objectives and strategies for marketing instruments and organization and implementation of marketing. According to my research, my strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School includes internal analysis, market analysis, customer analysis, competitor analysis and SWOT analysis.

3 METHODOLOGIES

Research methodologies are discussed here, including four sub-chapters. The first, research methods chapter describes qualitative and quantitative research methods, and the second, i.e. the data collection chapter, discusses the methods of data collection. The third, the research process chapter describes the interview and questionnaire methods. Lastly, the limitations of the research are discussed.

3.1 Research Methods

In this research work, research methods help me address the research objectives and answer the research questions. As was discussed in the first chapter, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in this research work.

According to Kent (2007, 86), the goal of qualitative marketing research is to explore and understand people's attitudes, perceptions, motivations and behaviors by constructing and analyzing data and qualitative research is a major part in supporting marketing decisions. Kent (2007, 117) also points out that quantitative marketing research seeks to evaluate the extent of, or changes in, marketing phenomena and to test ideas in order to make predictions. Moreover, the basis of quantitative marketing research is the construction and analysis of data.

3.2 Data Collection

According to Kent (2007, 69), data means systematic records and should be constructed by individuals. It may be judged and collected in many different ways. In addition, data includes qualitative data and quantitative data. Qualitative data should be composed of

words, phrases, text or images. Moreover, quantitative data are originated from numerical records. Therefore, the distinction between qualitative data and quantitative data is that qualitative data describe the essential characters of things and cannot be represented by numerical records. Quantitative data describe the number of characteristics of the phenomenon, and must use the numeric performance. (Kent 2007, 69-71.)

Collis and Hussey (2009, 73) point out that data can divide into primary data and secondary data. Primary data are the data derived from an original source, i. e. a researcher's experiment, surveys or interviews. Secondary data are data generated from an existing source, i. e. publications, databases or internal records. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 73.) Therefore, the main sources of this research work are the primary data. Moreover, I also use secondary data to assist this work.

In sum, in this research work, the main methods of qualitative data collection are the interviews and the main methods of quantitative data collection are the questionnaires. Additional theoretical knowledge of these methods is described in the next sub-chapter and more detailed information is provided in the appendices.

3.2.1 Data Collection of Interview

Collis and Hussey (2009, 144) define that interview is a method for collecting data in which selected interviewees are asked questions in order to find out what they do, think or feel. Generally, Interview consist of individual interview and group interview. In-depth interview is the main method of obtaining qualitative data in a successful way. Aaker, Kumar and Day (2006, 192) point out that an in-depth interview means that interviews are conducted face to face with the interviewee, in which the subject matter of the interview is explored in detail. In this research work, I do the individual interview, as the introduction chapter presented, I interview two Chinese English Schools' general manager, and the objective of these interviews is to acquire experience from them. From my point of view, interview skills are very important if the researcher wants to get

useful information. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and R. Jackson (2008, 127), there are six issues that may affect the outcome of an interview and researcher should pay attention to these issues. The first issue is creating trust from the interviewees, and this is the basic requirement and an important element. The second issue is social interaction which is also one of the important factors that could be influence the interview process. Using the appropriate language is a third element that can be important. The fourth element is the fact that getting access may have an effect on the interview. The fifth element influencing interview is choosing the location for the interviews. Recording interviews in the last factor that may affect the outcome of an interview. (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008, 127.)

3.2.2 Data Collection of Questionnaire

Questionnaire is the main method of quantitative research method, according to Kent (2007, 151). In order to capture data, researchers put questions to other people in the form of a questionnaire document, and this instrument is called questionnaire. In this research work, I use the questionnaire method as my quantitative research method and the questions of the questionnaire can be seen in the appendices. Kent (2007, 152) suggests the steps of questionnaire design, and the design is illustrated in Figure 6.

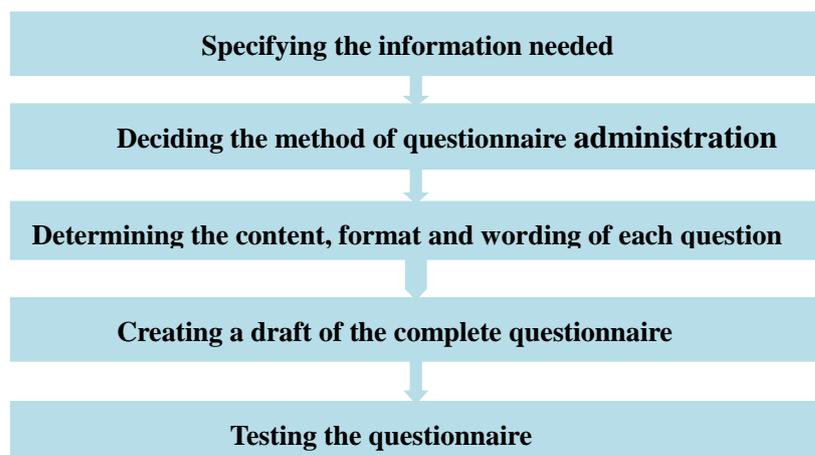


Figure 6. Steps in questionnaire design (Kent 2007, 152)

As figure 6 shows, the first step of questionnaire design is specifying the information, which means that the researcher should know what information is needed for the research and focus on this point when designing the questionnaire. Deciding the method of questionnaire administration is the second step, and there are four ways to choose the method of questionnaire administration. The ways are as follows: face to face, over the phone, postal questionnaire, or electronic questionnaires, in order to get the reliable information and ensure the efficiency of the work. In this research, I use the face to face method, as the introduction discussed, because I send the questionnaires to the students who are studying in the Sparkle International English School now. The third step is determining the content, format and wording of each question, which means that the researcher should think about the wording, format in order to layout of each question. Creating a draft of the complete questionnaire is another important step of questionnaire design, this means the researcher should pay attention on the sequencing of the questions and ensure that the interviewer will know what is the next relevant question to answer. In addition, when the questionnaire draft is complete and approved, it needs to be tested. (Kent 2007, 152.)

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005, 127), there are four steps of constructing questionnaires. The first step is to specify what type of information is needed. Secondly, researchers should consider whether the questionnaire is going to be disguised or undisguised. Thirdly, the construction of individual questions should be considered. Fourthly, researchers should consider how the questions are to be answered. In this research work, I use the system of Kent to design the questionnaire.

3.3 Research Process

The case company of this research is the Sparkle International English School in China. As was described in the first chapter, The Sparkle English School was opened in 2012, and therefore it is a new school and the school needs to be improved. In addition, I am involved in the operations of this school in the position of a director of marketing. From

this point of view, I decided to make a strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School after I talked with the CEO of the school.

3.4 Limitations of the Research

During the development of the research work, there were still some difficulties and problems. In the literature part in chapter two, there is extensive information about the strategic marketing plan, therefore, it was really difficult to choose a most proper theory in order to match the research work. Moreover, as discussed in the first chapter, the Sparkle International English School is a new company. Thus, it is difficult to analysis all the weaknesses, because it is still on the way to develop. Besides, because of the district and time limitation, I did the interview through the internet. From this point of view, the information that I collected through the interview was not particular.

4 STRATEGIC MARKETING PLANNING

Some main factors concerning strategic marketing planning are considered and analyzed here, with focuses on practical and empirical work. This chapter includes four sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter is a description of the situation of English schools in Chinese market, and the second sub-chapter provides the Sparkle International English school analysis. The market objectives are discussed in the third chapter, and the last sub-chapter details the strategic marketing plan process.

4.1 Situation of English School in Chinese Market

With the development of China's economy and the improvement of people's living standard, English has been attracting more and more people's attention in China, and many people also to be certain business opportunities and launched a number of English schools. The reasons why English schools are developing rapidly in the Chinese market are as follows:

Firstly, economic factors have promoted the development of the English school. In 2001, China took part in the world trade organization. Thus, China has more business with different countries and a great number of people want to learn English in order to improve their business. In 2001, China also won the bid for the Olympics and in 2008 Beijing hold the 29th Olympic games. Therefore, a number of foreigners visited China from all over the world and more Chinese noticed that it is necessary to learn English. Secondly, with the development of the economy and the improvement of people's living standard, a great number of Chinese go abroad for holidays or further study. Therefore, they have to learn English in order to survive in a foreign country.

At present, there are two successful English schools in China. The first one is called EF English First. The EF English First was opened in 1965, it is the largest education group

in the world , and specialized in English training. In 1993, the EF English First opened the first English school in China and it is also the earliest international language school in China. In 2008, the EF English First offered the English training service for the 29th Olympic games in Beijing. Nowadays, the EF English First has opened 46 English schools in China and spread in 44 cities. In the second place is the Neworiental. (Baidu 2012.) The Neworiental was opened in 1993, the main business of the Neworiental includes go abroad English training, oral English, basic English, college English. From so far, the Neworiental has established 55 schools in 49 cities in China, it has 600 home learning centers and the total training students nearly 13 million. In sum, the English school in Chinese market is still developing and it has a huge market potential. (Neworiental 2012.)

4.2 Sparkle School Analysis

As was presented in the introduction chapter, the case company of this research work is the Sparkle International English School. Therefore, in this sub-chapter, five main elements are considered of the Sparkle International English School, i.e. internal situation, market situation, customer situation, competitor situation, and SWOT analysis.

4.2.1 Internal Situation

The goal of the internal situation analysis is to find out the current situation of the Sparkle International English school, in order to develop the current strategies. Thus, in this chapter, the detailed information about the sparkle English school is discussed.

The Sparkle International English School was opened in August 2012. It is located in Langfang, Hebei province, China. The CEO of the Sparkle International English School

is Mrs. Wang. The main operation is English teaching for people of different ages. The Sparkle International English School has three floors, covers an area of 500 square meters and total investment amount of 300 million yuan. (Sparkle International English School 2012a.)

Mrs. Wang (2012) points out that the Sparkle International English School will develop through three stages, which are illustrated in Figure 7.

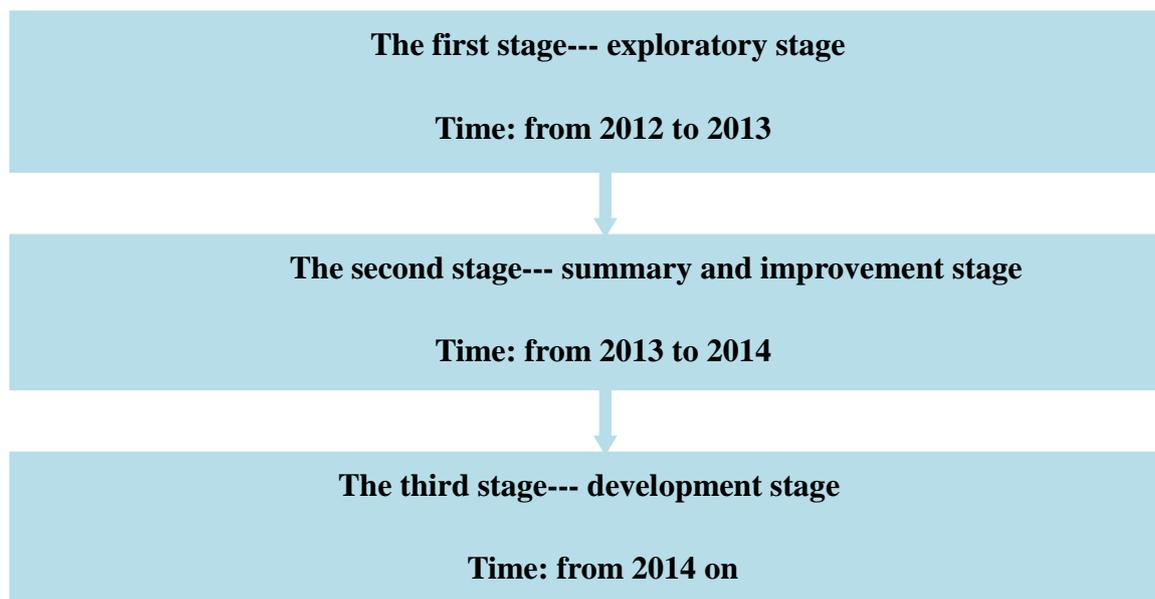


Figure 7. The three stages of the Sparkle International English School (Wang 2012)

From 2012 to 2013, it is the first development stage. During this period, it is the exploratory time. Thus, the school needs time to develop the market and make the strategic marketing plan. The second stage starts from 2013 to 2014, which is the summary and improvement stage. From 2014, it is the development stage of the Sparkle International English School.

At present, the main strength is that the Sparkle International English School has foreign teacher resources and the main weakness of the Sparkle International English School is the short experience in operation. There are two foreign teachers in the

Sparkle International English School. One of these teachers also teaches at the Beijing International Studies University, while the other one also teaches at the Beijing Language And Culture University. These two universities are among the acknowledged universities for language study, and thus, the Sparkle International English School can attract more customers with teacher resources. Moreover, this is also the main weakness from the point of view of the other English schools in Langfang City.

4.2.2 Market Situation

The market situation analysis is the basic and important factor of building a strategic marketing plan, and market situation includes current market situation and potential market situation. In this chapter, the market situation of the English school in Langfang City is discussed.

First of all, from the current market situation side, there are 12 English schools were opened except the Sparkle International English School in Langfang. According to the datum from the Education Bureau of Langfang. At present, there are two schools are cooperating with foreign countries in Langfang. The No. 3 Middle School of Langfang is cooperating with one of the schools in Singapore, and the No. 6 Middle School of Langfang has cooperation relationship with America and Canada. In addition, the students who want to go abroad for further study need to pass the ILETS exam. Therefore, the No. 3 and No. 6 Middle School need to cooperate with one of the English schools in Langfang in order to train the students in ILETS study.

The Langfang economic and technological development zone is the potential market for the English schools. According to Baidu (2012), there are 1300 foreign investment companies in the Langfang economic and technological development zone. Including the United States TianHe group, Germany Rool group, Germany Siemens, south Korean LG group, and Australia BHP 15 of the world's top 500 enterprises. (Baidu 2012.)

On the one hand, the foreigners who are working in those companies can go to the English school to learn Chinese. On the other hand, sometimes the workers need to train their English. Thus, the Langfang economic and technological development zone can be the potential market for the English schools.

4.2.3 Customer Situation

According to the information from the Sparkle International English School, the customers can be categorized into five different types. Firstly, the students who are studying at school but whose English level is very low, want to improve their English level at the Sparkle International English School. Especially for English reading, writing and listening, since the purpose of them is to get high marks in school. Secondly, the students who are going to graduate from high school and want to go abroad for further study. Therefore, they study TOEFL or ILETS in the Sparkle International English School and the purpose of them is to pass the exam to be able to go abroad. Thirdly, the people who are working in an English environment and go abroad for business negotiations study spoken English in the Sparkle International English School because they want to improve their English level, especially for English speaking. Fourthly, the people who are interested in English and want to enrich themselves, mostly elderly people who want to keep up with the trend of English studies. Fifthly, some foreigners from foreign investment companies, want to study Chinese in the Sparkle International English School. Their aim is to learn Chinese in order to live conveniently their lives in China. The percentage of different types of students are illustrated in figure 8.

As figure 8 presented. In the Sparkle International English School, there are 60% students want to improve their English and get high marks in school. 15% students study TOEFL or ILETS want to study abroad in the future and 10% students are businessmen. There are only 5% elderly people, and 10% foreigners study Chinese.

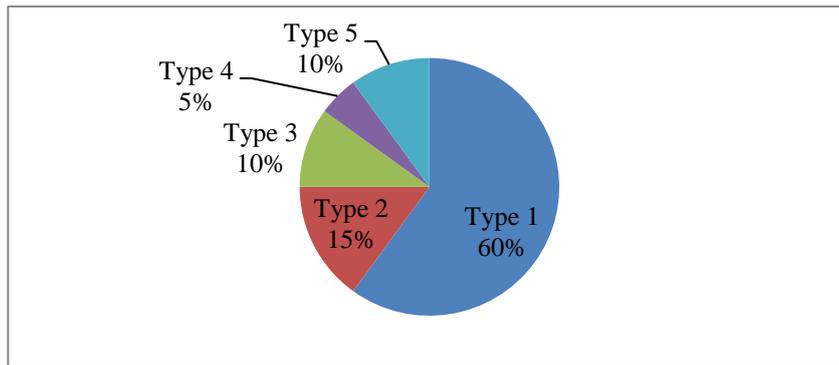


Figure 8. The percentage of different types of students (Sparkle International English School 2012b)

4.2.4 Competitor Situation

The competitor situation analysis aims at finding out the current situation and strategies of the competitors, in order to help the case company to adjust the current strategies. There are 12 English schools were opened before the Sparkle English School was opened in Langfang City, and these 12 English schools can be categorized into 3 types. The first type of these schools is that the main business is only English. The second type is that the schools' businesses include English and other foreign languages, i.e. Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, and last type is that the schools provide different subject teaching, e.g. English, maths, physics, and Chinese. Comparing with the Sparkle English School, the main competitors only from the first type and the others could be the potential competitors.

According to Mrs. Wang (2012), the CEO of the Sparkle International English School, there are two main competitors that compete with the Sparkle International English School, the Adam English School and the ChaoYue education. Adam English School was opened in 2005, and it is one of the earliest established English schools in Langfang City. The business of the Adam English School includes spoken English, business English and camp English. The Adam English School has two branches in Langfang city.

Therefore, the Adam English School is bigger than the Sparkle International English School. The ChaoYue education was opened in 2008, it has the similar businesses with the Adam English School. The only difference between the Adam English School and the ChaoYue education is that the Chao Yue education invites teachers from middle schools even high schools in order to attract more customers. Therefore, both of these schools have more operational experience than the Sparkle International English School. However, the Sparkle International English School has foreign teachers, this is the important strength of the Sparkle English School.

4.2.5 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a tool that can be used to evaluate the case company's internal and external situation. SWOT analysis includes four important elements, i.e. strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. On the basis of the SWOT analysis, a strategic marketing plan should use the strengths of the company and try to avoid the weaknesses, seize the opportunities and defuse the potential risks. As figure 9 illustrates, this SOWT analysis is based on the current situation of the Sparkle English School by considering the internal and external factors.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. The teacher resources. 2. Advantageous geographical location. 3. Abundant facilities. 4. Different new styles of services.	1. Short experience in operation. 2. No old-fashioned established ways of operating.
Opportunities	Threats
1. Potential market and customers. 2. Governmental policy. 3. The rapid development in Chinese economy.	1. Competition with competitors. 2. Need for extensive investment.

Figure 9. The SWOT analysis of the Sparkle International English School

The strengths of the Sparkle International English School are as follows:

Firstly, a strength in the Sparkle International English School is in the high-quality teacher. The school has Chinese teachers, and it also has foreign teachers. All the Chinese teachers have the experience of overseas study. Therefore, the teachers can teach the students how to study English as a Chinese and tell their experiences to the students. Moreover, all the foreign teachers are native speakers and they have rich experience in teaching. Thus, the students can learn professional English, and experience the different cultures.

Secondly, the Sparkle International English School has an advantageous geographical location. As was discussed in the first chapter, The Sparkle International English School locates in Langfang city and from Langfang to the capital city Beijing, it is 64 kilometers. In addition, in Langfang city, there are two middle schools near the Sparkle English School. From the middle schools to the Sparkle English school only about 200 meters. Therefore, the Sparkle International English School has a great number of potential customers.

Thirdly, the Sparkle International English School has abundant facilities. In the Sparkle International English School, every classroom has a projector and audio equipment. Moreover, the school also has a professional listening room and computer room.

Fourthly, the Sparkle International English School has different new styles of services. As was presented in the first chapter, there are two departments in the Sparkle English School. The first department offers professional English teaching courses, i.e. IELTS, TOEFL. The school also offers different courses for people of different ages, i.e. children, teenagers, adults, and seniors. The second department is the consulting department, through which the school can offer the reliable information to the people who want to go abroad to study.

The weaknesses of the Sparkle International English School are including the following elements:

Firstly, the Sparkle International English School has a short experience in operation. The Sparkle International English School was opened in August 2012. Thus, it is a new school and compared with the other English schools in Langfang, this is the weakness in the process of development.

Secondly, the Sparkle International English School has no old-fashioned established ways of operating. Therefore it is possible to react to the needs that arise in the market and be even proactive in innovating with new ways of learning.

The opportunities of the Sparkle International English School are as follows:

Firstly, as was discussed in the strength part, the Sparkle International English School has an advantageous geographical location, because it is near the capital city, Beijing. In addition, there are two middle schools near the Sparkle English School. Thus, the Sparkle International English School has a potential market and customers.

Secondly, governmental policy is also one important opportunity for the Sparkle International English School. The Chinese government implements the opening-up policy, encouraging and supporting the Chinese students go abroad for further study to learn advanced technology and knowledge. According to the Voice of the Strait (2012), in 2000, there were 39000 Chinese students go abroad, and in 2011 the number of studying abroad has reached 339700, increased almost ten times (Liu 2012). Therefore, this is an opportunity for the Sparkle International English school to have more potential customers.

The rapid development in Chinese economy is the third opportunity for the Sparkle International English School. The standard living of the Chinese people has increased

obviously in recent years. Therefore, more people can afford to study English even by going abroad for further study.

The threats of the Sparkle International English School are as follows:

Firstly, competition with competitors is the main threat of the Sparkle International English School. As was discussed in the first chapter, the Sparkle English School was opened in August 2012. Thus, it has a short experience of operating. According to LANGFANGNEWS (2012), there were 12 English schools in Langfang city before the Sparkle English School was opened (Li 2012). Therefore, they have more experience than Sparkle International English School.

Moreover, the need for huge investment is the other threat of the Sparkle International English School. The Sparkle International English School has three floors, covers an area of 500 square meters. Thus, the need for extensive investment is one of the threats of the Sparkle International English School, because it is still growing and needs more experience of operating.

4.3 Market Objectives

According to Mrs. Wang (2012), the objectives of the Sparkle International English School are as follows: for the Sparkle International English School customers are the main market players. Firstly, the school should implement the suitable market strategy, stable development and get profit. Secondly, open the market and create own brand.

First of all, for the Sparkle International English School customers are the main market players, all the strategies of the Sparkle International English School should satisfy customers' needs and wants. Mrs. Wang (2012) points out that today, some English schools think that interest is the most important factor, by doing that they ignore the

customers' feeling, and the customers will not satisfied with those schools. Therefore, the strategies should catch up with the customers' needs. Secondly, the Sparkle International English School should implement the suitable market strategy. At present, the Sparkle International English School needs to learn from the other English schools' experiences and draw lessons from the past. All the strategies of the Sparkle International English School must keep up with the change of market demand. Thus, the Sparkle International English School needs to find out its own development model and use suitable strategies. Then, the Sparkle International English School needs to develop stably and get profit.

The second objective is to open the market in Langfang city and create a brand for the Sparkle International English School. Today, the Sparkle International English School just entered the market, The School does not have many customers. Therefore, the Sparkle International English School needs a feasible strategic marketing plan. In addition, Mrs. Wang (2012) points out that she hopes the Sparkle International English School will have its own brand. Therefore, more customers will be attracted by the Sparkle International English School and this factor will also promote the development of the school.

4.4 Strategic Marketing Plan Process

The analysis of the Sparkle International English School and the market objectives of the Sparkle International English School were described above. According to the theoretical knowledge in chapter 2 and in accordance with the analysis of the Sparkle International English School in chapter 4, a strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School are described in this sub-chapter. Furthermore, this strategic marketing plan is supported by the five 'Ps', i.e. Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Partnerships.

The product is the first aspect. The current services of the Sparkle International English School has described in the introduction chapter. Thus, the current services of the Sparkle International English School should be improved and new products should be designed for the strategic marketing plan. At present, the main business of the Sparkle International English School is English teaching. The consulting department of the Sparkle International English School offers suggestions concerning studying abroad for students who want to go abroad. In addition, the Sparkle International English School also has visa and insurance services. According to the market analysis, the Langfang economic and technological development zone is the potential market. Thus, teach foreigners to learn Chinese is a new main service for the Sparkle International English School.

Mrs. Wang (2012) points out that the price impact on the customers' demand. The peak season for the English school is the summer holiday and the Chinese new year holiday. Therefore, during the low season, it is possible to use the strategy of free lessons during the low season. Thus, it can attract more customers during the low season.

There are two strategies for the place aspect. Firstly, there are 3 high schools and 8 middle schools in Langfang City. Thus, the Sparkle International English School can send some brochures to these schools in order to introduce the different services of the Sparkle International English School. Secondly, the CONSUMPTION SQUARE is the popular free reading in Langfang City. Therefore, the Sparkle International English School can do advertising through the CONSUMPTION SQUARE.

The promotion factor has an effect on the development the Sparkle International English School. Therefore, it is possible to use the strategy of membership card. Moreover, the Sparkle International English can offer demo class, the demo class can attract more customers, and increase the popularity of the school.

The partnership is the last aspect. According to the market analysis, in Langfang City, the No. 3 Middle School and No. 6 Middle School need English school partners. Thus, the Sparkle International English School can contact both of them and build partnerships with them. Moreover, at present, there are 11 tutorial schools in Langfang, the main business of them is to teach students different subjects in order to help the students to improve their scores at school. Therefore, the Sparkle International English School can establish the cooperation relations with them. These cram schools can introduce more customers to the Sparkle International English School.

In sum, the strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School is based on the 5 'Ps' method. It includes important suggestions, useful for the Sparkle International English School. In addition, these strategies could change with the market trend.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are discussed here. Firstly, it is the conclusion of this work. Based on the theoretical knowledge and the analysis of the research, the answers of the research questions are discussed. Secondly, some suggestions for the future research are suggested.

5.1 Conclusions

First of all, this research work aims at learning how to make a strategic marketing plan and design a feasible strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School. Moreover, this research work illustrates the strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School. The strategic marketing plan is in accordance with the internal situation, market situation, customer situation, competitor situation, and the SWOT analysis. In addition, this strategic marketing plan is supported by using the five 'Ps' method, and it will help the development of the Sparkle International English School.

During the process of this research work, I combined the basic theoretical knowledge with the empirical knowledge, in order to build a feasible strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School. Firstly, internal analysis is the basic step of building a strategic marketing plan, and internal analysis helps me to get a detailed understanding of the Sparkle International English School. Therefore, the internal analysis can lay the foundation for building the Strategic marketing plan. Secondly, market analysis is the important factor to build a strategic marketing plan, and the strategic marketing plan should follow the market trend. Thus, I did two market analyses in the empirical part of this research work. The first analysis is the English school in the Chinese market analysis, and the second one is the market analysis of the Sparkle International English School in Langfang City. Thirdly, the customer analysis

has discussed in this research work. In addition, I used interview and questionnaire methods in order to understand the customer motivation. Fourthly, the competitor analysis has described in the theoretical part, and the competitor analysis helped the researcher and the case company to know the current situation of the competitors. Fifthly, the SWOT analysis is the main tool for building the strategic marketing plan in this thesis work. Based on the SWOT analysis and five 'Ps' method, the Strategic market plan for the Sparkle International English School was built by the researcher.

This research work has two research questions and two sub- research questions, The discussions and analysis of the research questions are as follows:

1. What is a strategic marketing plan?

A strategic marketing plan can be understood as follows: based on the current market situation and opportunities, design strategies for the company, in order to achieve the market objectives. A strategic marketing plan includes five factors, i.e. internal analysis, customer analysis, market analysis, competitor analysis, and SWOT analysis.

A successful strategic marketing plan should find out the strengths of the case company and come up with the weaknesses of the competitors. Moreover, the strategic marketing plan needs to suit the market trend. In this research work, the strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School is based on the theoretical knowledge and using the five 'Ps' method.

The first sub question: What are main factors needed in the strategic marketing plan?

There are five factors needed in the strategic marketing plan. The first factor is the internal analysis, and internal analysis is the basic factor of a strategic marketing plan. The internal analysis conducted in this research helped the researcher find out the current situation and detail information of the case company. Moreover, in this research

work, the market analysis includes current market analysis and potential market analysis. The third factor is the customer analysis, and the competitor analysis is the fourth factor of the strategic marketing plan. Through the competitor analysis, the researcher found out the current strategies of the competitors and the weaknesses. The SWOT analysis is the last factor, the SWOT analysis the most useful tool in the strategic marketing planning process.

2. How can a strategic marketing plan be made for Sparkle International English School?

According to the theoretical knowledge and empirical knowledge. The strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School includes five elements. Firstly, through the internal analysis, all the detail information was found out, the current situation of the Sparkle International English School is the substruction of building the strategic marketing plan. Secondly, the market situation is one of the important factors. In this research work, market analysis includes two analyses, the first analysis is the situation of the English school in Chinese market, and the second analysis is the market situation of the English school in Langfang City. Thirdly, different types of customers are discussed in the customer analysis. I sent 30 questionnaires to the Sparkle International English School, and 27 students responded to my questionnaire. Therefore, the respondent rate is 90%, which is high. Fourthly, the competitor analysis helps the Sparkle International English School to make new strategies and I was interviewed two general managers of the English school in Langfang City. Fifthly, SWOT analysis is the most useful tool for building the strategic marketing plan for the Sparkle International English School.

The second sub question: What is the current market situation and the future market potential for the English school?

The current market situation and the future market situation were described in detail in

chapter 4. At present, there are a number of English schools in Chinese market, and the English school still has a great market potential.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

This research work focused on the strategic marketing plan of the Sparkle International English School. The strategic marketing plan also provides suggestions in order to help the development of the Sparkle International English School.

This strategic marketing plan also opens up a new field for the case company. As the marketing director, the researcher will monitor and evaluate the performance of the strategic marketing plan.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Appendix 1

1. How do you think the situation of the English school in Langfang at the present?
2. What kind of marketing strategies did you use in order to promote your English school?
3. What kind of strategies did you use to attract customers in your school?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the English school?
5. What factors will affect the development of the English school in Langfang?
6. Who are the current and potential customers in your English school?
7. During the development of your English school, what kind of difficulties have you faced?
8. Can you give any suggestions for the development of the English school?

Name	Position	Company name	Interviewed time	Interviewed date
Sun, Jiliang	General manager	Adam English School	10:00- 11:00	10 th Nov, 2012
Wu, Peihong	General manager	ChaoYue education	14:00- 15:00	10 th Nov, 2012

QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix 2

1. Age:

- A. Under 20 B. 20-34 C. 35-44 D. 45-54 E. Over 54

2. Education:

- A. High school B. Vocational School C. Bachelor's Degree
D. Master's Degree E. More higher

3. Are you satisfied with the service of the Sparkle International English School?

- A. Very satisfied B. Satisfied C. OK D. Unsatisfied

4. How many students would you like to have when you study English?

- A. One to one B. 2- 5 students C. 6- 10 students D. 11- 15 students
E. 16- 20 students F. More than 20 students

5. Which aspects does the Sparkle International English School should be improved?

- A. Study material B. Teacher resources C. Study environment D. Nothing

6. Have you improved your English after study in the Sparkle International English School?

- A. Quite a lot B. A lot C. A bit D. A little

7. Any more suggestions for the Sparkle International English School?

Only one choice form Q1 to Q6, Thank you very much!