

Analysis on Academic and Employment Cognitions of Students Majoring in Marketing at Ningde Normal University

Guideng Xu ^{1, *}, Yikang Yan ²

¹ College of Economics and Management, Ningde Normal University, Ningde, CO 352100, China

² Faculty of education, University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, CO 50603, Malaysia

* Corresponding author: Guideng Xu (Email: xuguideng@126.com)

Abstract: The content of marketing major includes human resources, finance, sales, logistics and other management contents in the field of management, with some hybridity. Insufficient cognition on the major and one's own psychological characteristics affects the optimal allocation of time during college years, which in turn affects academic performance and employment. Through questionnaire surveys of current students and interviews of graduated students majoring in marketing at Ningde Normal University, this paper analyzes students' academic and employment cognitions. Some lower-grade students majoring in marketing have vague cognitions about their major. In addition to the unclear cognitions about the major, like students of other majors, a certain proportion of students also lack clear cognitions about their own psychological characteristics. After students start learning marketing, it is necessary to improve their cognitions about the major through various means. Offering career planning courses in the first semester enables students to cognize the major and themselves earlier, so that they can engage in purposeful learning and training during college, which is beneficial for their academic development and employment.

Keywords: Cognition of Major; Learning Goals; Marketing; Psychological Characteristics.

1. Introduction

Ningde Normal University is an emerging local undergraduate university which started to enroll undergraduate students in 2010. It has carried out undergraduate education for 14 years so far, among which the marketing major has a 10-year history of undergraduate education. The content of marketing major is somewhat hybrid in nature [1]. The academic atmosphere in local universities is not as strong as in top universities, and the faculty is not as powerful. A certain proportion of current students majoring in marketing lack sufficient cognition on academics, psychological characteristics and other aspects related to employment.

2. Overview of Academic and Employment Cognitions of Students Majoring in Marketing at Ningde Normal University

2.1. Overview of the Marketing Major at Ningde Normal University

Ningde Normal University was formerly Ningde Normal College. In March 2010, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, Ningde Normal College was upgraded to Ningde Normal University, an undergraduate institution, and began to enroll undergraduate students that year. In 2013, the Department of Economics and Management of Ningde Normal University started to enroll undergraduate students majoring in marketing. In 2017, the marketing major began to enroll 2-year college graduate students for the undergraduate program. From 2017 till now, there have been undergraduate graduates majoring in marketing from the 4-year program every year; from 2019 till now, there have been graduates

majoring in marketing from the 2-year undergraduate transfer program for college graduates every year.

2.2. Overview of Academic and Employment Cognitions of Marketing Major Students at Ningde Normal University

There are 230 current students majoring in marketing at Ningde Normal University. Questionnaire surveys were conducted for freshman to senior students as well as those in the 2-year college graduate undergraduate transfer program, with questionnaires distributed according to classes. 163 questionnaires were received, relatively evenly distributed across classes.

According to the questionnaire feedback, most students majoring in marketing had deviations in their cognition of the major in lower grades. A certain proportion of students lacked cognition on self-management of time and were often wandering around. A certain proportion of students did not have clear learning goals during college. Some students in the 2-year college graduate undergraduate transfer program had not taken any career planning courses before. For 4-year undergraduate students, career planning courses were arranged in the 6th semester, and a certain proportion of students took career-related assessments perfunctorily. Some students, though tested before, still had unclear cognitions about their own personalities and temperament. The purpose of academic study is employment or entrepreneurship. Unclear cognitions about academics, time management and psychological characteristics demonstrate unclear cognitions about future aspired careers and employment.

3. Deficiencies in Academic and Employment Cognitions of Marketing Major Students at Ningde Normal University

Major is an important component of academics, and academics relate to employment. Having clear cognitions about one's major, cognizing occupations suitable to one's psychological characteristics, and learning with clear goals will help enhance competitiveness for employment and will be beneficial for obtaining employment.

3.1. Insufficient Cognition about the Marketing Major

Students who have a profound understanding of their major will have clearer learning goals during the learning process. Before coming to Ningde Normal University, when it comes to marketing, 55% of students thought marketing majors will do sales jobs in the future. Among 2-year college graduate transfer students majoring in marketing, 38% thought marketing majors do sales jobs before enrolling in the undergraduate marketing program.

Among the 4-year undergraduate students majoring in marketing that were surveyed, 45% did not apply for the marketing major at Ningde Normal University for the college entrance exam, but were allocated to the marketing major. These non-first-choice marketing major students would have weaker cognition about the major compared to those who put marketing as their first choice. After being admitted to the marketing major through the college entrance exam, 73% of students did not look deeply into what marketing major is about.

The 2-year college graduate transfer students majoring in marketing have gone through 3 years of college education. Some of them were marketing majors in college, while some were not. Their cognition about the major is higher than 4-year undergraduate students who were admitted to marketing major directly through college entrance exam. Among 2-year college graduate transfer students majoring in marketing, 77% did not look deeply into the marketing major when applying for the 2-year undergraduate marketing program.

The Department of Marketing gave introductions about the major to new students, but 57% of students indicated they still did not have an in-depth understanding of the marketing major after the introductions.

3.2. Insufficient Cognition about One's Own Psychological Characteristics

College students' career development should be combined with the self. Factors including interest, personality, beliefs, values and opportunities play a role in career choices. These factors go through iterative cycles and form feedback effects that will change the development trajectory of career choices [2]. The ultimate goal of going to college is employment or entrepreneurship, and more people choose employment. Since different people have different career interests, capabilities, values, temperament characteristics, and personality traits, different people are suitable for different jobs. For example, some are suitable for management jobs, while others are more suitable for technical jobs. However, many current college students lack sufficient cognition about their own psychological characteristics.

In secondary school, most people's goal for studying is to

move on to higher education. College is the bridge between school and society. During undergraduate years, some study to pursue further education, but most face employment after graduation. Marketing majors graduate with a degree in "Management", but not all marketing students are suitable for "management" jobs. Having a clearer understanding during college about occupations they will be suitable for in the future, and focusing their studies and practical training accordingly, will be beneficial for future employment.

Ningde Normal University offers career planning courses for marketing majors in the 6th semester of college. 17% of 2-year college graduate transfer students did not take any career planning courses during college, and career planning was not offered in the 2-year marketing curriculum. Among students who have taken personality and temperament assessments, 13% took the assessments perfunctorily and not seriously. Among students who have taken personality and temperament assessments, 36% felt they still did not have a clear understanding of their own temperament, personality and other characteristics after taking the assessments. Insufficient recognition of one's own temperament, personality and other psychological characteristics is detrimental for optimized self-improvement.

3.3. Unclear Learning Goals and Time Allocation Cognitions

High school students have the unified goal of going to college. Although the ultimate purpose of receiving higher education is employment or entrepreneurship, undergraduate students have different post-graduation paths, like pursuing graduate studies, taking civil service exams, teacher recruitment exams, exams for state-owned enterprises, or finding non-state-owned companies. Different graduation paths need clear goals and efforts towards those goals. The content of the marketing major is somewhat hybrid. Most graduates doing corporate jobs are involved in work related to some parts of the marketing major content. Current students can focus their studies and professional content related to their hoped future jobs, based on their own characteristics and clearer goals.

There is a saying that "there will always be regrets in life", but time does not flow backwards. The regrets left behind by marketing graduates in the past due to not working hard enough during college, are still being repeated by some current students. When interviewing and surveying Ningde Normal University marketing major graduates from many years ago, and asking them "If you could start over the marketing undergraduate studies from the beginning, how would you arrange your time during college?", the graduates replied: They would prepare earlier for postgraduate entrance exams and get admitted; They would spend more time taking exams for national institutions like teacher recruitment and get into those institutions through efforts; They would pass the College English Test Band 4 earlier and prepare teacher recruitment exams earlier; They would participate more in practical activities related to courses and professional content; They would spend more time obtaining certificates, because there is no ample time for obtaining certificates after graduation; They would more proactively and deeply study professional knowledge instead of just dealing with exams perfunctorily, and so on. If they could start over marketing undergraduate studies, the things those graduates wished they had worked harder on are exactly what current students should be working hard on.

4. Suggestions for Improving Academic and Employment Cognitions of Marketing Major Students at Ningde Normal University

4.1. Strengthen Education on Cognition of the Major

Education on cognition of the major has always been carried out, but the effect has not been good enough. The way of explaining cognition of the major must be improved. Inviting alumni who have graduated with a marketing degree to give talks on the major on campus will help students establish cognition of the major.

4.1.1. Change the Way of Explaining the Major to New Students

The Department of Marketing at Ningde Normal University educates new students about the major by having the department chair give explanations after enrollment. The core content of the explanations includes introducing the characteristics of the major, courses, and career directions. It is suggested that during the explanations, there should be more interactions between teachers and students, with teachers answering more questions of concern to students. Appropriate examples featuring post-graduation paths of exemplary graduates from previous years could be cited during the explanations, such as those successfully pursuing graduate studies, passing civil service exams, getting jobs at state-owned enterprises, passing teacher recruitment exams, and excelling at non-state-owned companies. This can inspire students. Professor Chen Rong from the Business School of Wuhan Institute of Technology and Science suggests carrying out education about the major for students every semester [3]. Students having a full understanding of their major will have clearer purposes during usual studies.

4.1.2. Invite Graduated Alumni to Explain the Major

From 2017 till now, there have been 7 graduating classes. Among the 7 classes there are those who successfully pursued graduate studies, passed civil service exams, became teachers, got jobs at state-owned enterprises, excelled at non-state-owned companies, etc. Appropriately inviting these graduates with different career paths back to campus to share their learning experiences will be beneficial for current students' cognition about the marketing major, help them establish clearer learning goals, encourage them and arouse their motivation.

4.2. Strengthen Career Planning Education

The career planning course for marketing majors at Ningde Normal University is arranged in the 6th semester, when more than half of the college years have passed and students have become relatively familiar with their major. Getting to know oneself earlier would be more beneficial for targeted learning. It is suggested to arrange the career planning course in the first semester. College education is different from high school education. High school students all work hard towards college, but college nurtures various talents, e.g. management, technology, sales. When students enter their freshman year, they face a learning environment and ways of learning different from high school. It is necessary to first do career planning carefully, and make short-term and mid-term career planning as much as possible for the undergraduate years. When taking the career planning course, evaluate oneself carefully, get a relatively clear understanding of one's

interests, temperament, personality, capabilities and values, and seriously consider suitable careers for oneself in the future. Striving in directions suitable for oneself will be beneficial for effective use of time by college students.

In addition to suggesting moving the career planning course to the first semester, students should also attach more importance to the career planning course. If they think career planning is useless, or just about employment counseling, or just a process to obtain course credits, and take assessments perfunctorily, that will be detrimental for their own career planning and detrimental for maximizing the benefits of college years.

4.3. Enable Students to Make Good Use of College Time based on Clear Learning Goals

Based on the characteristics of the marketing major, and career planning according to one's own interests, temperament, personality, capabilities, values, etc., students should cherish time during college after establishing clear directions to strive towards, and make full use of time to work towards suitable directions. Marketing majors cover management content in many areas like human resources, finance, logistics, and sales. It also covers traditional marketing, online marketing, new media marketing, e-commerce, etc. During studies, students can focus on and deeply study content aligned with their career inclinations, which will be beneficial for enhancing their competitiveness for employment.

Students aiming to pursue graduate studies should start learning foreign languages well from freshman year. In addition to foreign languages, those wanting to pursue graduate studies should analyze the situations of senior schoolmates who went for graduate studies early on, to get references about what levels of universities and majors they might get admitted to. If graduate schools they aim for require math exams, they should start spending time early on learning math. After determining the major to apply for, they should study core courses of that major early on.

Students wanting to take teacher recruitment exams should obtain teacher qualifications early on during college, since they major in marketing. To match their major for future education career, they should take every opportunity to study a second major or second degree related to education during college, pass the College English Test Band 4 and above, which will be beneficial for obtaining the second degree.

Students hoping to become civil servants or work at state-owned enterprises or government agencies should strive to become class and student leaders during college, and do a good job at those positions, join the Party organization, and do well in studies. They should make efforts to get selected as civil service candidates, candidates for state-owned enterprises or government agencies.

Most graduates end up working at non-state-owned companies, possibly for a few years or a whole career. During college, in addition to participating in various school activities, they should make serious efforts to learn the courses offered by the school well, instead of dealing with exams passively. If only dealing with exams passively, they may feel "too little too late" when putting knowledge to use in the future. In addition to seriously participating in school-organized internships and hands-on activities, they should make full use of winter and summer breaks to engage in internships related to hoped future careers. They should

observe job fairs and check job websites early on, look for positions they are interested in, check requirements of employers, and based on employers' requirements, strengthen learning and training during college to become qualified candidates for their desired employers.

Some students want to start their own businesses. They can use after-school time during college to participate in business incubation projects organized by the school. For students aspiring to start businesses, learning cultural courses well is still very important, since time for focused learning will not be as abundant as in college after starting a business.

5. Conclusion

College is an important stage in life for learning professional knowledge. "Every minute is precious", cherish the wonderful college years, learn knowledge well, which will be beneficial for enhancing competitiveness for employment and career development. Human energy is limited, and time in college is also limited. Based on fully understanding the characteristics of one's major and one's own psychological

traits, choose suitable learning orientations, and learn and train deeply with clear goals, which will be beneficial for one's personal growth.

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