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ARTICLE

RESEARCH ON MARKETING COUNTERMEASURES FOR SICHUAN CATERING INDUSTRY IN THE ERA OF NEW MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the high-end market in the catering industry has been cooling down and tilting toward the popular low-priced catering market. Meanwhile, with the cost of raw materials and human resources going up, and as more and more well-known catering enterprises at home and abroad march into Sichuan, the ever-growing competition in Sichuan catering market has been squeezing the profit margin of such enterprises. In the era of New Media, the competition of catering enterprises has gone beyond the wrestling on dishes and service. To stand out from the fierce market competition, they have to keep up with the times and meet the ever-growing personalized needs of consumers. Therefore, developing a marketing strategy by means of New Media is vital for a catering enterprise. Based on such problems faced by catering enterprises with Sichuan regional specialty as catering brands at home and abroad marching into Sichuan for a grab of market share, rising cost, the conflict of regional dining habit and the current food consumption concept, this research explored the catering marketing strategies in the era of New Media. Based on literatures on New Media at home and abroad, the marketing strategies and relevant theories, this research analyzed the marketing strategy advantages and disadvantages of a catering enterprise in the era of New Media. Meanwhile, from the perspective of consumers, this research distributed questionnaires to study the habit of and preference to media use of consumers of different ages, education backgrounds and monthly disposable incomes, their attitudes toward New Media marketing, and the factors influencing their dining decisions. In the end, this research concluded on the data analysis of the survey, obtained the characteristics and personalized needs of New Media users and offered targeted recommendations for catering enterprises in Sichuan to develop New Media marketing strategies, thus to maximize the effect of New Media marketing.

KEYWORDS

New Media; Catering Enterprises; Marketing Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

In August, 2021, China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) published the 48th *Statistical Reports on Internet Development in China*. According to it, as of June 2021, 21.75 million people in China became netizens in annual terms, and the netizen population in China reached 1,011 million, now an Internet penetration rate of 71.6%, a 1.2% increase compared with that in December 2020. Among them, 1.07 billion are mobile phone users, accounting for 99.6% of the total. There are 812 million online shopping customers in China, accounting for 80.3% of netizens, an increase of 29.65 million compared with that in December 2020. According to the data, the researcher found that with the development of information technology and computer technology, the size of the Internet population has grown exponentially, and enterprises' marketing strategies have been tilting toward the Internet. As a cultural heritage of China, Sichuan cuisine has a long history and unique cultural connotation, When exposed to the same message, different cultural groups and sub-cultural groups may differ in their cognition and decoding ^[1]. Meanwhile, the media for

information communication has gone through great changes. With the development of Web 2.0, digital technology and network technology have developed rapidly, and the media for information communication have tilted toward the form welcomed by a wider audience with better communication speed and interactivity. With the in-depth development of new-generation network technologies such as the Internet, big data, and cloud intelligence, people can obtain massive amounts of information on mobile phones or mobile platforms ^[2]. Traditional media, represented by newspapers, radios and TVs with such limitations as unified audience and low interactivity, is gradually being replaced by digitalized New Media such as social media (e.g. Weibo), portals and group purchasing platforms (e.g. Meituan). Therefore, the rapid development of New Media has greatly changed the media and channels of information communication, which has also brought a big opportunity as well as challenge to brand publicity and marketing, especially for a catering brand. If a catering enterprise can quickly transform and keep up with New Media, it will obtain great advantages. Otherwise, if sticking to the traditional marketing, it will face a survival dilemma. Under such an environment, based on such problems faced by catering enterprises with Sichuan regional specialty as catering brands at home and abroad marching into Sichuan for a grab of market share, rising cost, the conflict

of regional dining habit and the current food consumption concept, this research explored the catering marketing strategies in the New Media Age, and hoped to offer reference for the development and profit making of catering enterprises in Sichuan.

1.2 Research purpose and significance

1.2.1 Research purpose

Firstly, this research developed a theoretical framework based on a literature review, laying a theoretical foundation for later discussions on specific influences over Sichuan catering enterprises and strategies. Secondly, this research analyzed the opportunities and challenges brought to Sichuan catering enterprises by New Media marketing, as well as the overall marketing environment. Thirdly, through a questionnaire survey analysis, this research analyzed the influences over market segmentation, different New Media platforms, different topic scenes, different participation and the customization of different dining tastes over the New Media marketing of Sichuan catering enterprises. Lastly, this research concluded on the influences over New Media marketing applied by Sichuan catering enterprises and offered targeted strategies and recommendations.

1.2.2 Research significance

Theoretical significance: Scholars at home and abroad have conducted thorough researches on the emergence of New Media, and there have been countless researches on the practice of New Media in catering marketing strategies. Geographically, there are few researches on the marketing strategies applied by catering enterprises in Sichuan. Therefore, this research focused on the analysis of marketing strategies applied by catering enterprises in Sichuan in the New Media Age, thus laying a theoretical foundation for relevant researches.

Practical significance: Based on relevant researches, this research focused on the real demands and preferences of Sichuan customers. This research chose the media and forms customers habitually use for marketing information communication and pinpointed the targeted customers of catering enterprises. In this way, when developing marketing strategies, this research broke away with the stereotype concept held by traditional catering enterprises that marketing is all about low-price promotion, and highlighted the advantages of New Media marketing in reducing marketing costs and making marketing activities more efficient. Under the waves of information, an enterprise can only remain standing with low costs and high profit by keeping up with New Media trends and integrated marketing strategies.

1.3 Research thought process and content

1.3.1 Research thought process

This research focused on how to help catering enterprises in Sichuan meet customer the personalized demands of customers in the New Media Age and communicate marketing information to customers in a way welcomed by them, for which a set of efficient marketing strategies were developed. Through a thorough understanding of the development and trends of New Media, its marketing strategies and its effects on the catering industry, and from the perspective of customers, this research discussed the influences of New Media over marketing strategies applied by catering enterprises in Sichuan and offered reasonable recommendations for catering enterprises in Sichuan to develop New Media marketing strategies.

1.3.2 Research and problems to solve

(1) What is the current research status of New Media and catering marketing in China? What conclusions could offer theoretical support for this research?

(2) Are Sichuan customer demographic characteristics such as gender, purchasing power and education background relevant to the validity of New Media marketing?

(3) In the New Media Age, what are the factors currently influencing Sichuan catering marketing?

(4) What strategies and recommendations can be offered targeting these influencing factors?

1.3.3 Research content

(1) Theoretical framework and literature review of this research

By reviewing relevant literatures at home and abroad, this research clarified and analyzed the current development and current research status of New Media, and its effects on marketing strategies applied by catering industry. Meanwhile, based on Philip Kotler "11P" marketing theory, this research chose 4Ps - product, place, probing and partitioning, and designed a questionnaire based on those four indicators.

(2) The specific effects of Sichuan catering enterprises on New Media marketing, its disadvantages and the strategies

Through a descriptive statistical analysis on the distribution of basic demographic variables, channels customers obtain food information from and their New Media use habits, this research discussed the factors influencing a customer's dining decision in different scenes. Meanwhile, this research conducted a test on reliability test and validity on the scale of a customer's attitude toward New Media marketing and a correlation analysis on channels customers obtain food information from for each demographic variable. According to the sample data analysis, this research offered recommendations for catering enterprises in Sichuan to develop New Media marketing strategies.

(3) Research limitations and outlooks

The researcher reviewed the research conclusions and marketing recommendations from the sample data analysis, and pointed out the limitations and outlooks of this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Current research status of marketing strategies applied by catering industry

The concept of marketing in the West has gone through six stages of development and evolution since 1920s, from the initial concept of production, the concept of product, the concept of sales, the concept of marketing, the concept of customers to the concept of today's social marketing^[3]. To survive and thrive, Western enterprises with different production capabilities and under different historical background have developed different marketing concepts for corresponding marketing strategies. China, however, is in the primary stage of a socialist market economy, so there is still a gap between the Chinese marketing concept and the Western one. For 30+ years from the reform and opening up till now, the catering industry management system has gone through three stages of development, from the planned economy system, the planned commodity economy system to today's socialist market economy system. Most catering enterprises are still poorly aware of marketing, and their understanding and awareness of marketing strategies remain at the surface^[4]. Guan (2002) believes that the marketing concept of catering enterprises in China is relatively lagged behind, and some enterprises even remain at the "concept of production". They do not consider the changing demands of customers, nor market researches, just passively waiting for customers to come. Although some catering enterprises have realized the importance of marketing, they superficially equal it to sales, damaging their reputation in the end^[5].

2.2 Current research status of New Media marketing applied by catering industry

The increasing costs of labor and raw materials, the high taxes and fees and the sluggish growth in the catering industry have made it harder and harder for catering enterprises to develop. Today when confronted with multiple difficulties, increasing income and cutting expenditure with the help of information technology is an important means for catering enterprises to get out of marketing predicament and maintain core competitiveness. Tourism and Sichuan cuisine play an important role in promoting the economic and social development of Sichuan Province^[6]. Having realized the importance and necessity of New Media in marketing, catering enterprises have begun to enhance their marketing effect with New Media tools, expecting a stable customer source and

relatively high profit. Currently, the media platforms applied by catering enterprises for marketing activities are mainly social media (e.g., Weibo and WeChat), group purchasing websites (e.g., Dianping.com and Meituan), takeaway ordering websites (e.g., Ele.me, Taodiantian and US Group Takeaway), the information from a restaurant's official website or SMS. Scholars' researches of interest on such media platform applied by catering enterprises are as follows.

2.2.1 Marketing on social media (e.g., Sina Weibo)

Jiang Ying et al. define marketing on Weibo as follows. In a broad sense, it refers to a new type of marketing form with which a catering enterprise communicates information on its products and services. In a narrow sense, it refers to a communication form with which a catering enterprise makes plans, creates creative copywriting and publishes information on its products and service, thus to attract Weibo users to make purchase and dine at its restaurant. Compared with traditional media, a catering enterprise conducting marketing activities on Weibo enjoys the following advantages. Firstly, a clear target audience. Weibo users who follow an enterprise's Weibo account are basically interested in its food provision, so the information on its products or services can be accurately communicated to its target audience, thus greatly increasing the probability of a purchasing behavior. Secondly, a much lower cost. Weibo is a free platform for a catering enterprise for marketing. As long as the enterprise manages its copywriting well, it will get Weibo users to know about the enterprise and build a good reputation. Thirdly, a better interaction. Through Weibo, a catering enterprise can interact and communicate with Weibo users in a timelier manner, thus to understand their real demands, answer their questions and improve itself based on their dissatisfactory experiences. Fourthly, a word of mouth communication of reputation. The timely feedbacks from Weibo users after experiencing an enterprise's products can provide reference to other users' decision-making. Meanwhile, compared with traditional word-of-mouth communication, word-of-mouth communication with the Internet breaks geographical restrictions, thus the communication is wider in scope and more influential in power. Finally, the information communication form and content on Weibo are flexible, thus easier for Weibo users to accept. Compared with traditional DMs and TV ads, the marketing on Weibo is more fashionable and better targeted, thus to prevent audience from repelling at the ads and even at the enterprise.

2.2.2 Group purchasing website marketing (e.g., Dianping.com)

Firstly, resources. Most customers choose Dianping.com because there is a large number of catering enterprises working with Dianping.com for them to choose from and similarly, a catering enterprise will also prefer to cooperate with a reputable platform like Dianping.com, which boasts a large user base so that the information of a restaurant can be communicated to a wider audience, thus bringing a stable source of customers to the restaurant. Secondly, the communication of product value. Take Dianping.com for example, its core advantage is the objective online opinions from its users. Under an O2O trading model, a user can learn about the restaurant's environment, dishes and service in advance through other users' opinions. With such a psychological expectation, the risk at consumption is reduced and a more reasonable decision can be made. Thirdly, technology. For a mature group purchasing website, there is usually a professional technical team in charge of its maintenance, R&D, optimization and upgrade, ensuring it is stable for communication and trading between a catering enterprise and its users. Meanwhile, its online payment + offline consumption model is more convenient for users. Fourthly, scope of coverage. A catering enterprise working with a group purchasing website is no longer geologically restrained to first and second-tier cities, and its influence is gradually expanding to third and fourth tier cities.

2.2.3 Takeaway ordering websites (e.g., US Group Takeaway)

In recent years, as various New Media platforms pop up, the costs of information communication have been greatly reduced, and information update is becoming increasingly fast and its scope increasingly wide. As a result, customers are always showered in complex information. How to accurately pinpoint target customers and provide them with products and service keeping up with times to meet their personalized demands is the key for a catering enterprise to grab market shares and maintain competitive. Therefore, with New Media technology, it is vital for a catering enterprise to fully realize the importance in New Media

marketing and conduct targeted marketing activities based on their own characteristics, rather than to simply conduct marketing activities with New Media tools or to start a price war. Only by realizing the importance of New Media marketing and accurately grasping the development trends of New Media marketing can a catering enterprise make full use of it.

2.3 Theoretical foundation

2.3.1 4P theory

The 4P marketing mix is an analysis on sales from the perspective of sellers. Product mix mainly includes the entity, brand and packaging of a product, a collection of the products and services provided by an enterprise to a target market. The price mix is mainly composed of a base price and a discount price. Place, commonly referred to a marketing mix, is mainly composed of marketing channels, storage facilities, etc., referring to various activities organized and conducted by an enterprise for a product to enter and reach a target market. Promotion refers to activities to communicate with a target market conducted by an enterprise with various information carriers, including ads, sales by sellers, commercial promotion, public relations, etc.

2.3.2 Marketing related theories

Marketing channel is an important concept and theory in marketing. Kotler, an American scholar, put forward that in the process of goods or labor sales, any individual or enterprise offering help is a marketing channel. Traditional marketing channel theories divide sales into the direct distribution and indirect distribution, and this theory still applies to most of the sales today. In any market, marketing channel is absolutely the key to any enterprise's profit and development. A series of forthcoming marketing channel theories were founded based on this one.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methods

Based on the characteristics of this research, it is necessary to fully understand the current marketing environment status of Sichuan catering enterprises, and to analyze the changes in consumption psychology and behaviors for customers in the New Media Age. Therefore, this research was conducted based on a literature review and a questionnaire survey.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Questionnaire design

The attention to New Media marketing in the catering industry was not paid until two years ago, so few scholars had studied it before. According to 11P marketing theory (product, price, promotion, place, political power, public relations, probing, partitioning, priority, positioning and people), put forward in 1986 by Philip Kotler, the founding father of marketing, and combining with the current marketing status of Sichuan catering enterprises, the researcher chose 4Ps - place, product, probing and partitioning to explore the strategies of New Media marketing for Sichuan catering enterprises.

The questionnaire was mainly composed of four parts, namely a respondent's basic information, his/her habit of New Media use, his/her attitude toward New Media and the factors influencing his/her decision making. A respondent's basic information included his/her gender, age, education background, monthly disposable income and the channels they obtain food information from. His/her habit of New Media use included his/her habit of choosing a New Media tool, his/her preference to New Media functions, his/her choice of a dining occasion and dishes on New Media. A respondent's attitude toward New Media was asked from the two dimensions of his/her recognition of and the influence over a decision making. The factors influencing a respondent's decision-making behaviors include the information type he/she follows when screening information, factors influencing choosing a restaurant having not visited or factors influencing going to a restaurant again.

The questionnaires were distributed in paper questionnaire and on

Table 1: The Scale of a Customer’s Attitude Toward New Media marketing

Attitude	Question	Description
Recognition	1	I often browse food information on the Internet.
	2	If there’re two similar restaurants, I’d prefer the one recommended by New Media.
	3	After dining in a restaurant, I’m happy to share my dining experience on New Media with other users.
	7	I don’t repel at the food ads on Weibo and WeChat.
The what extent it influences a decision making	8	I’d like to participate in the interactive activities held by a catering enterprise (scanning a QR code, sharing it on WeChat) for reward.
	4	When choosing a restaurant, I am very concerned about the opinions of other customers.
	5	The dining environment and food of a restaurant described on New Media have a big influence over my decision making.
	6	The hot and interesting topics created by a restaurant (such as takeaway delivered by a Mercedes-Benz) will particularly arouse my interest to dine there.

Table 2: The Scale of Respondents’ Attitudes Toward New Media Marketing

Dimension	Valid sample	Questions included	Cronbach’s α coefficient	Validity
The overall scale	224	8	0.815	High

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett’s Sphericity Test Results of Respondents’ Attitudes Toward New Media Marketing

KMO coefficient	Approx. chi-square	Bartlett’s sphericity test (Sig)
0.853	487.55	0.000

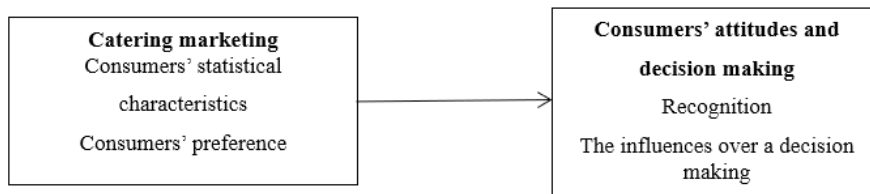


Figure 1: The Theoretical Model

Sojourn for customers with dining experience in restaurants. Altogether 300 paper questionnaires, 100 paper ones and 200 Sojourn ones, were distributed. The number of questionnaires should be 5-10 times the number of questions. On each questionnaire, there were 20 questions, so 300 questionnaires met the requirement. 251 valid questionnaires, 78 paper ones and 173 valid Sojourn ones, were recovered, a recovery rate of 83.67%, which was deemed efficient. After reviewing the answers, the researcher found that their answers were meaningful for a subsequent analysis.

3.3.2 Research hypotheses

The model applied by this research was a simple influence model, as shown in Figure 1.

From the perspective of New Media, there are many ways for a catering enterprise in Sichuan to influence a customer’s attitude toward and decision making on New Media, such as market segmentation, namely choosing the factors that can significantly influence a customer’s attitude from customers’ statistical characteristics and segmenting marketing activities quickly based on them. This research put forward the following six hypotheses.

- H1: Gender has an influence over New Media’s effect on a decision-making.
- H2: Education background has an influence over a customer’s attitude toward New Media.
- H3: Education background has an influence over New Media’s effect on

a decision-making.

- H4: Education background has an influence over a customer’s attitude toward New Media.
- H5: Monthly disposable income has an influence over New Media’s effect on a decision-making.
- H6: Monthly disposable income has an influence over a customer’s attitude toward New Media.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The test on reliability

To test the rationality of the questionnaire scale table design, the author applied internal consistency reliability to check whether questions in the questionnaire were mutually exclusive, and to observe the Cronbach’s α coefficient of the validity test. The author ran a validity test on the overall scale of respondents’ attitudes toward New Media marketing, and the result is shown in Table 2.

From the data in Table 2, the author found that the Cronbach α coefficient of respondents’ attitudes toward New Media marketing was 0.815, indicating a good reliability and a high-credibility scale design. Therefore, the Cronbach α coefficient of this scale met the requirements. The scale was of a high reliability, meeting the requirements of an empirical research, indicating a go for the further research.

4.2 The test of validity

Table 4: The Test of Homogeneity of Variance

	Levene statistics	Significance	Variances equal?
Gender and overall attitude	1.261	0.263	√
Gender and recognition	0.327	0.568	√
Gender and influence over a decision making	5.82	0.017	×
Age and overall attitude	1.063	0.411	√
Age and recognition	0.927	0.449	√
Age and influence over a decision making	0.996	0.376	√
Education background and overall attitude	3.105	0.027	×
Education background and recognition	1.552	0.202	√
Education background and influence over a decision making	2.375	0.071	√
Monthly disposable income and overall attitude	3.339	0.006	×
Monthly disposable income and recognition	2.998	0.012	×
Monthly disposable income and influence over a decision making	3.19	0.008	×

Table 5: One-way ANOVA Result

	F	P	Conclusion
Gender and overall attitude	12.56	0.000	A significant difference
Gender and recognition	13.078	0.000	A significant difference
Education background and influence over a decision making	3.483	0.017	A significant difference
Age and overall attitude	1.534	0.193	No significant difference
Age and recognition	1.867	0.117	No significant difference
Age and influence over decision making	0.681	0.606	No significant difference
Education background and recognition	2.324	0.076	No significant difference

Table 6: The Nonparametric Test Result

Original hypothesis	Significance level	Conclusion
Difference in gender could affect New Media's influence over decision making	0.024	To keep the original hypothesis
Difference in education background could affect the overall attitude toward New Media	0.014	To keep the original hypothesis
Difference in education background affect New Media's influence over decision making	0.425	To reject the original hypothesis
Difference in monthly disposable income could affect New Media's influence over decision making	0.301	To reject the original hypothesis
Difference in monthly disposable income could affect the recognition of New Media	0.666	To reject the original hypothesis

The author applied factor analysis method and ran a KMO test and a Bartlett's sphericity test on its construct validity. A KMO (coefficient > 0.5) means that the scale is a go for a factor analysis and the bigger the coefficient is, the better the effect is. A $p (< 0.05)$ Bartlett's sphericity test result means the scale passed the test on construct validity.

From the data in Table 3, the author found that the KMO coefficient of respondents' attitudes toward New Media marketing was 0.853, far greater than 0.5, indicating that the scale was a go for the factor analysis. In the Bartlett's sphericity test, the p was smaller than 0.05, indicating the scale of respondents' attitudes toward New Media marketing passed the test on construct validity.

4.3 ANOVA

To study whether the difference of respondents' attitudes toward New Media marketing under different demographic variables were significant, the author applied an ANOVA variance. Before the test, the author ran a test of homogeneity of variance on each respondent's gender, age, education background and monthly disposable income. The result is shown in Table 4.

From the data in Table 4, the author found that respondents' overall attitude toward New Media marketing were equal in variances of gender and age, that respondents' recognition of New Media marketing were equal in variances of gender, age and education background, that the influence of New Media over a respondent's decision making were equal in variances of gender and education background. For groups with equal variances, a one-way ANOVA was run by the author to verify the hypotheses. For groups with unequal variances such as gender and overall attitude, education background and overall attitude, education background and overall attitude, monthly disposable income and overall attitude, monthly disposable income and recognition, monthly disposable income and influence over a decision making, a nonparametric test was run by the author for verification. The result of the single ANOVA test is shown in Table 5.

From the data in Table 5, the author found that there was a significant difference between gender and overall attitude and gender and recognition and that there was a significant difference between education background and influence over decision making.

The author then ran a nonparametric test on groups with unequal variances, including gender and overall attitude, education background

Table 7: Correlation Analysis of Demographic Variables and the Channels Respondents Obtain Food Information From

Variable Significance Channel	Gender	Age	Education background	Average monthly disposable income
Traditional media	0.210	0.035	0.439	0.004
Recommendations from friends	0.058	0.855	0.769	0.152
Social media	0.224	0.212	0.333	0.387
Group purchasing websites	0.301	0.209	0.045	0.365
Online takeaway ordering websites	0.051	0.018	0.996	0.052
Official websites and SMS	0.090	0.622	0.800	0.810
Search engines	0.118	0.427	0.030	0.385

Table 8: Correlation Analysis of Demographic Variables and Dining Scenes

Variable Significance Dining scene	Gender	Age	Education background	Average monthly disposable income
A banquet	0.128	0.443	0.725	0.129
A friend get-together	0.036	0.014	0.025	0.724
A family get-together	0.272	0.097	0.431	0.091
A fast-food meal on a working day	0.810	0.175	0.358	0.553

Table 9: Basic Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Basic demographic characteristics		Number of respondents	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Gender	Male	110	43.82%	43.82%
	Female	141	56.18%	56.18%
	Total	251	100.00%	100.00%
Age	< 18	14	5.58%	5.58%
	18-24	185	73.71%	79.28%
	25-30	36	14.34%	93.63%
	31-40	9	3.59%	98.37%
	> 40	7	2.79%	100.00%
	Total	251	100.00%	100.00%
	Education background	Junior high school or lower	13	5.18%
Technical school or senior high school		23	9.16%	14.34%
Junior college or college		199	79.28%	93.63%
Graduate school		16	6.37%	100.00%
Total		251	100.00%	100.00%
Average monthly disposable income	< 1,500 yuan	132	52.59%	52.59%
	1,500-3,000 yuan	60	23.90%	76.49%
	3,001-4,500 yuan	32	12.75%	89.24%
	4,501-6,000 yuan	14	5.58%	96.20%
	6,001-10,000 yuan	8	3.19%	99.38%
	> 10,000 yuan	5	1.99%	100.00%
Total	251	100.00%	100.00%	

and overall attitude, education background and overall attitude, monthly disposable income and overall attitude, monthly disposable income and recognition, monthly disposable income and influence over decision making. The result is shown in Table 6.

From the analysis in Table 6, the author reached the conclusion that

there is a significant difference in gender in terms of New Media's influence over decision making and that there is a significant difference in education background in terms of overall attitude toward New Media marketing.

4.4 Correlation analysis

To study the correlation between demographic variables and the channels respondents obtain food information from, the author conducted a correlation analysis on the correlation between the gender, age, education background, average monthly disposable income and the channels respondents obtain food information from.

From the data in Table 7, the author reached the following conclusions: there is a significant correlation between average monthly disposable income and whether respondents obtain food information from traditional media; there is a significant correlation between age and whether respondents obtain food information from online takeaway ordering websites; there is a significant correlation between education background and whether respondents obtain food information from search engines. According to Pearson correlation coefficient, the author made the following observations: there is a negative correlation between the average monthly disposable income and whether respondents obtain food information from traditional media, namely the higher a respondent's average monthly disposable income is, the less likely he would obtain food information from traditional media; there is a negative correlation between age and whether respondents obtain food information from online takeaway ordering websites, namely, the older a respondent is, the less likely he would obtain food information from online takeaway ordering websites; there is a positive correlation between education background and whether respondents obtain food information from search engines, namely, the higher a respondent's education background is, the more likely he would obtain food information from search engines.

From data in Table 8, the author reached the following conclusions: there is a significant correlation between a respondent's gender, age, education background, average monthly disposable income and whether he would make purchases on New Media at a friend get-together scene. According to Pearson correlation coefficient, the author made the following observations: a female respondent is more likely to make purchases on New Media at a friend get-together scene than a male respondent; there is a positive correlation between the age and education background and whether a respondent would make purchases on New Media at a friend get-together scene, namely, the higher a respondent's education background is, the older he is (in a certain range), the more likely he would make purchases on New Media at a friend get-together scene.

4.5 Analysis of New Media's factors influencing catering marketing in Sichuan

4.5.1 Segmentation on the market's influence over catering marketing in Sichuan

As of demographic characteristics of the sample, male respondents accounted for 43.82% and female respondents 56.18%. According to *China New Media Online Users Report (2015)* by iResearch, male netizens accounted for 57.3% of the total number of respondents and female netizens 42.7%. The details are shown in Figure 4-1.

From Figure 2, the author found that although the gender distribution of the sample data differed from that of *China New Media Online Users Report (2015)* by iResearch, its distribution was basically balanced. The gender distribution of the sample data was reasonable and could be used for the subsequent analysis on gender factors, respondents' attitudes toward New Media and the factors influencing decision making.

As of sample data's age distribution, respondents under 18 years old accounted for 5.58% of the sample population, respondents aged 18-24 accounted for 79.28%, respondents aged 25-30 accounted for 14.34%, respondents aged 31-40 accounted for 3.59% and respondents over 40 years old accounted for 2.79%. In the report by iResearch, New Media netizens under 18 years old accounted for 1.1% of its survey population, New Media netizens aged 18-30 accounted for 43%, New Media netizens aged 31-40 accounted for 35.85% and New Media netizens aged over 40 years old accounted for 20.05%. After comparison, the author found that the age group of the sample data was too concentrated on 18-30 years old, because fewer respondents in the younger age group, middle age group and elder age group make purchases on New Media and the number of respondents filling out the questionnaire was small. The questionnaires distributed on Sojump were basically to young customers, and middle-aged and elderly customers tend to be negative

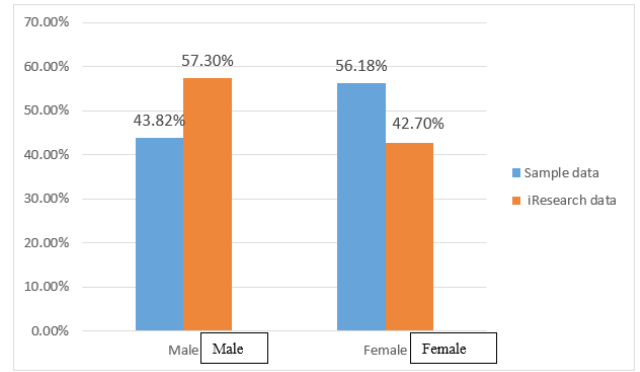


Figure 2: The Gender Distribution Diagram of the Sample Data and iResearch Data

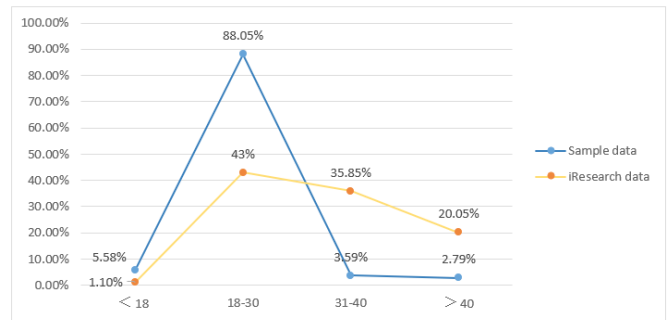


Figure 3: The Gender Group Distribution Diagram of the Sample Data and iResearch Data

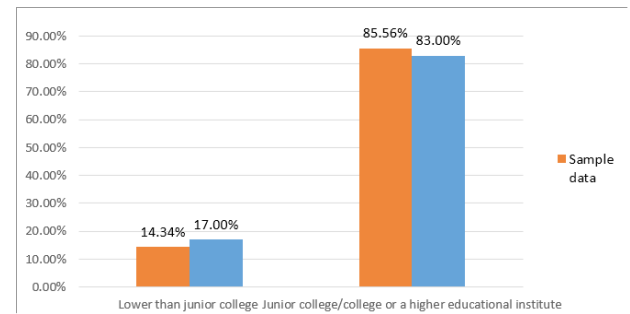


Figure 4: The Education Background Distribution Diagram of the Sample Data and iResearch Data

and reluctant filling paper questionnaires out. Therefore, the sample data of this survey was concentrated on customers aged 18-30, one of the limitations of this research. The gender group distribution diagram of the sample data and iResearch data is shown in Figure 3.

As of sample data's education background distribution, 5.18% of the respondents graduated from a junior high school or a lower educational institute, 9.16% graduated from a technical school or a senior high school, 79.28% graduated from a junior college or college and 6.37% graduated from a graduate school (including M.D and Ph. D). From the distribution of education background, the author found that respondents were concentrated in junior college or college group. In the report by iResearch, 55.8% of New Media netizens graduated from a junior college/college or a higher educational institute, 27.2% graduated from a junior college, altogether 83% graduated from a junior college or a college or a higher educational institute, a share basically matching with that in the sample data. The details are shown in Figure 4.

As of sample data's average monthly disposable income, 52.59% of respondents had an average monthly disposable income of less than 1,500 yuan, 23.9% 1,500-3,000 yuan, 12.75% 3,001-4,500 yuan and 10.76% above 4,500 yuan. The average monthly disposable incomes of most respondents were low, as most respondents were undergraduates

Table 10: The Basic Demographic Characteristics Distribution of Traditional Media Loyal Respondents

Basic demographic characteristics		The number of respondents	Share
Gender	Male	15	13.64%
	Female	12	8.51%
	Total	27	10.76%
Age	< 18	3	21.43%
	18-24	16	8.65%
	25-30	3	8.33%
	31-40	2	22.22%
	> 40	3	42.86%
	Total	27	10.76%
Education background	Junior high school or lower	7	53.85%
	Technical school or senior high school	7	30.43%
	Junior college or college	13	6.53%
	Graduate school	0	0.00%
	Total	27	10.76%
Average monthly disposable income	< 1,500 yuan	12	9.09%
	1,500-3,000 yuan	5	8.33%
	3,001-4,500 yuan	6	18.75%
	4,501-6,000 yuan	3	21.43%
	6,001-10,000 yuan	1	12.50%
	> 10,000 yuan	0	0.00%
Total	27	10.76%	

Table 11: The Frequency Distribution of Table of Respondents' New Media Use Habits

Score	Ranking	Social media	Group purchasing websites	Online takeaway ordering platforms	Official websites or MSM	Search engines
5	Frequently use	82	92	30	6	14
4	Often use	44	67	54	22	25
3	Sometimes use	45	20	51	30	27
2	Seldom use	17	16	34	58	32
1	Rarely use	13	4	18	47	73
-	Total	768	824	605	371	388
224	Average	3.43	3.68	2.70	1.66	1.73

and graduate students, whose average monthly disposable incomes are relatively low.

4.5.2 The influence of different New Media platforms over catering marketing in Sichuan

Firstly, the distribution of food information channels.

As of channels respondents obtain food information from, 50.6% of respondents would turn to traditional media such as leaflets and TV, 67.73% would turn to recommendations from friends, 55.78% would turn to social media such as Weibo and WeChat, 59.76% would turn to group purchasing websites such as Meituan, Dianping.com, 29.88% would turn to online takeaway ordering websites such as Ele.me, 10.36% would turn to official websites or SMS, and 14.74% would turn to search engines for information.

In the Information Age, customers are getting increasingly inclined to New Media tools, such as group purchasing websites and social media for food information. With the widespread application of online takeaway ordering websites in 2014, customers are getting increasingly inclined to order takeaway online as well. Fewer customers would get food information from an official website of a catering enterprise, SMS or

search engines, which is the reason why most catering enterprises have exerted more efforts on New Media marketing tools on social media, group purchasing websites and online takeaway ordering platforms and paid less attention advertising on search engines. Although New Media tools are popular among customers and are widely used, most customers would still get food information from traditional media or recommendations from friends. Therefore, for a catering enterprise, customers' word of mouth still has strong influence over their decision making. When summarizing the distribution of channels for food information, the author found that 27 respondents had never used New Media tools and had only obtained information from traditional media and friends. The author defined such people as traditional media loyal customers. The basic demographic characteristics distribution of traditional media loyal respondents (customers) is shown in Table 10.

From Table 10, the author found that there was no significant difference in gender distribution among traditional media loyal respondents, with the share of male respondents slightly higher than female respondents. As of the distribution of age, traditional media loyal respondents were mainly concentrated in the age group of 40 and above, then 31-40 and under 18. As of the distribution of education background, traditional media loyal respondents were mainly concentrated in respondents with a low education background. As of the distribution of average monthly

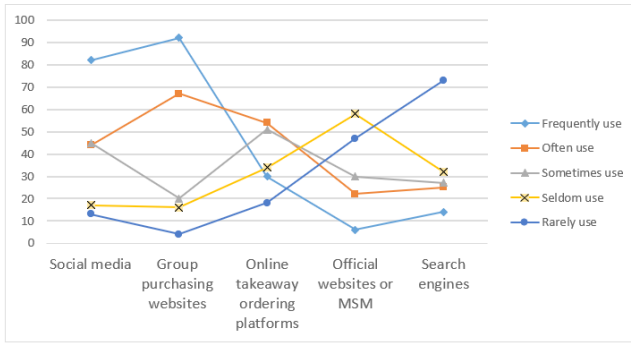


Figure 5: The Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Media Tools Use Habits

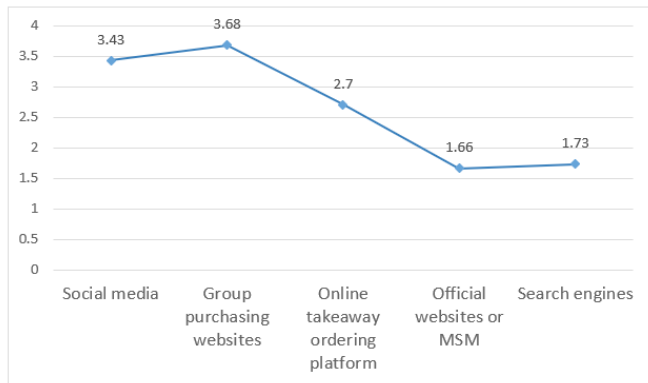


Figure 6: The Frequency Score Distribution of Respondents' New Media Use Habits

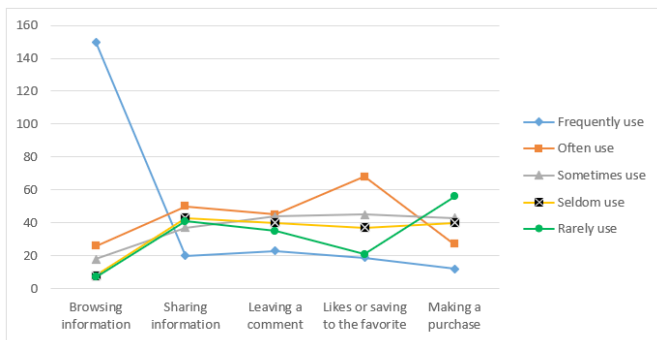


Figure 7: The Distribution Diagram of Respondents' Preferences for New Media Tool Functions

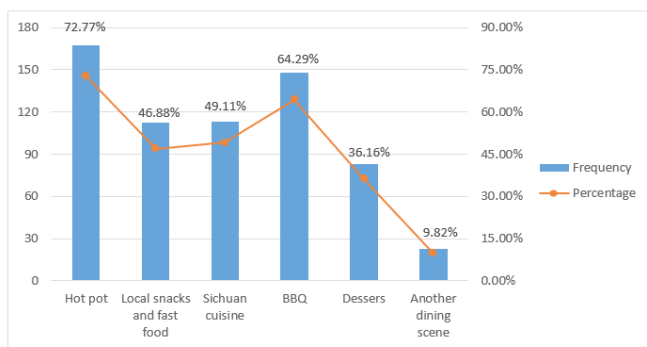


Figure 8: The Distribution of Respondents' Dining Place Choices Based on Dining Scenes on New Media

disposable income, there was no significant difference among traditional media loyal respondents. Therefore, the author reached the conclusion that traditional media loyal customers have such characteristics: the number of male customers is slightly bigger than female customers,

the number of middle aged and elderly customer and minor customers is significantly bigger than young customers, and the number of low education background customers is significantly bigger than high education background customers.

Secondly, new Media use habits.

The 27-traditional media loyal respondents mentioned above were not included in the subsequent influence of New Media over marketing activities carried out by Sichuan catering enterprises, as such people had never used any New Media tool. The author used sorting questions, allowing respondents to choose the media platforms according to their frequency of use. The author then summarized the number of respondents using social media, group purchasing websites, online takeaway ordering platforms, official websites or MSM, and search engines on each ranking. The first ranking choice got 5 points, the second 4 points, the third 3 point... The unchosen one got 0 point. The author summed up the total points and calculated the average points for their New Media use habits. The detail is shown in Table 3.

From the data in Table 3, the author found that group purchasing websites were respondents most frequently used New Media tool, with an average score of 3.68, followed by social media, with an average score of 3.43. The rarely used ones were official websites or MSM and search engines. Therefore, when a catering enterprise is limited on cost for New Media marketing activities, it could refer to respondents' media platform use habits, prioritize its marketing and publicity on group purchasing websites and social media platforms, thus to communicate its marketing information to a wider audience. The frequency score distribution of respondents' New Media use habits is shown in Figure 5.

The author also used sorting questions to find out respondents' preference to media tool functions. Respondents were required to rank a New Media tool's five major functions of browsing information, sharing information, leaving a comment, likes or saving to the favorite and making a purchase. Then the author applied the same summarization method as above. Respondents' preferences to New Media tool functions is shown in Table 12.

From Figure 8, the author found that respondents' most frequently used function was browsing information, followed by likes or saving to the favorite, and making a purchase. The average score of browsing information was much higher than other functions, and the average score of making a purchase was the lowest among them. The author reached the conclusion that customers on New Media are mostly rational customers, who do not make purchases easily. Instead, they would make purchases after browsing the food and service information on multiple restaurants. Moreover, respondents usually use New Media tools without a purpose, so they don't make purchases easily. Therefore, when carrying out New Media marketing activities, a catering enterprise should pay special attention to the content and form of the information to communicate. The strategy is successful if its marketing activities can arouse customers' interest.

As of choosing a dining place on New Media, 87.5% of respondents would choose a dining place on New Media for a friend get-together, 53.57% for a fast-food meal on a working day, 49.55% for a family get-together, 26.34% for a banquet and 16.52% for another dining scene. The detail is shown in Figure 9.

From the data in Figure 9, the author found that respondents would habitually choose a dining place on New Media for a friend get-together, and the share of respondents choosing a dining place on New Media for a fast-food meal on a working day working or a family get-together was also high. Therefore, when carrying out marketing activities on New Media, a catering enterprise could consider designing more dish combos for a friend or a family get-together, or more fast-food meals on a working day.

As of the choice of food, 72.77% of respondents chose hot pot, 64.29% barbecue, 49.11% Sichuan cuisine, 46.88% local snack and fast food and 36.16% desserts. The author found that customers would choose various kinds of food on New Media, especially the hot pot and barbecue. Therefore, catering enterprises specializing in various types of food, including the hot pot, local snacks, Sichuan cuisine, can carry out marketing activities on New Media, where there are abundant target customers. The detail is shown in Figure 10.

Table 12: Respondents' Preference to New Media Tool Functions

Score		Browsing information	Sharing information	Leaving a comment	Likes or saving to the favorite	Making a purchase
5	Frequently use	150	20	23	19	12
4	Often use	26	50	45	68	27
3	Sometimes use	18	37	44	45	43
2	Seldom use	8	43	40	37	40
1	Rarely use	7	41	35	21	56
-	Total	931	538	542	597	433
224	Average	4.16	2.40	2.42	2.67	1.93

Table 13: The Ranking of Concerns Over Marketing Information

Ranking	Lowest price	The nearest place	The place with best customers' comments	The place most popular with customers	The latest published
The biggest concern	40	58	78	44	4
A major concern	25	51	80	58	3
A mediocre concern	47	51	40	51	10
A minor concern	66	38	11	46	19
The least concern	19	10	2	3	135
Total	592	733	854	700	235
Average	2.64	3.27	3.81	3.13	1.05

Table 14: The Factors Influencing Choosing a Restaurant Having not Visited

Score	Ranking	Promotions and deductibles	Comments of other customers	The number of purchases made	Dining environment and original pictures of a restaurant
5	The biggest concern	74	98	21	31
3	A mediocre concern	39	66	61	46
2	A minor concern	38	34	72	53
1	The least concern	52	15	49	70
	Total	615	771	481	469
224	Average	2.75	3.44	2.15	2.09

Table 15: The Frequency Distribution of Factors Influencing Visiting a Restaurant Again

Score	Ranking	Brand	Dishes	Service quality	Promotions and deductibles	Dining environment	Proximity
10	The biggest concern	32	126	26	22	8	10
8	The second biggest concern	21	54	81	31	21	9
7	The third biggest concern	33	21	52	36	59	9
5	The fourth biggest concern	30	8	38	48	40	29
3	The fifth biggest concern	32	7	5	38	63	40
1	The least concern	44	1	8	20	14	90
	Total	1009	1901	1485	1094	1064	590
224	Average	4.50	8.49	6.63	4.88	4.75	2.63

4.5.3 The influence of different topic scenes over catering marketing in Sichuan

As of the influencing factors over customers' decision-making behavior on New Media, the author conducted research from three perspectives – respondents' concern over marketing information, factors influencing choosing a restaurant having not visited and factors influencing visiting a restaurant again.

Firstly, the author researched on respondents' concern over marketing information. Respondents were required to rank the following factors

of price, the nearest place, reputation, the number of purchases made and worthiness of the product. The calculation method for each factor's average score was the same as above. The result is shown in Table 13.

From the data above, the author found that respondents were frequently concerned about customers' comments, then the nearest place, the number of purchases made, and lastly price and information update speed. Respondents valued the comments of other customers on New Media much more than others, indicating that with the development of information technology and network technology, traditional word of mouth communication method has transformed, and customers are

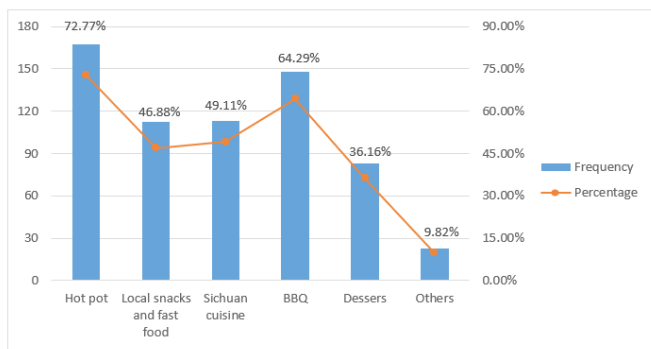


Figure 9: The Distribution Diagram of Respondents' Choice Of Food on New Media

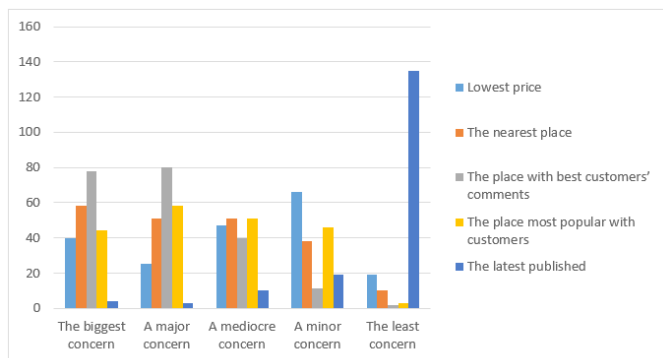


Figure 10: The Distribution Diagram of Concerns Over Marketing Information

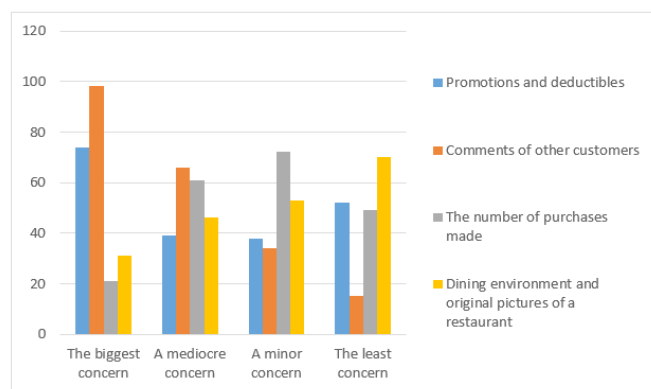


Figure 11: The Distribution Diagram of The Factors Influencing Choosing A Restaurant Having Not Visited

getting increasingly inclined to interact with others on New Media tools or obtain information on New Media.

4.5.4 The influence of different participation and experience over catering marketing in Sichuan

As of factors influencing choosing a restaurant having not visited, respondents were required to rank the following four factors of promotions and deductibles, comments of other customers, the number of purchases made, dining environment and original pictures of a restaurant. The result is shown in Table 14.

From the average scores of the four factors in Figure 11, the author found that when choosing a restaurant having not visited, customers' biggest concern was the comments and scores of other customers on that restaurant, which was consistent with the respondents' ranking. Their second concern was promotions and deductibles of that restaurant on New Media. Therefore, the author reached the conclusion that in the new era when great importance is attached to "interaction" and "experience", customers are paying more and more attention to the

consumption experiences of other customers, which may have a direct influence over customers' decision making.

4.5.5 The influence of different dining tastes and customization over catering marketing in Sichuan

The author researched on the factors influencing visiting a restaurant again. Respondents were required to rank the following six factors of a restaurant's brand, dishes, service quality, promotions and deductibles, dining environment and proximity. The result is shown in Table 15.

Dishes were the biggest factor influencing whether respondents would visit a restaurant again, with an average score as high as 8.49, which is also a big marketing point. Taking consideration of the influencing factors above, a catering enterprise could customize dishes according to each customer's taste, thus creating a new marketing point. The core task of a catering enterprise is to manage its dishes, food quality and service quality well, and expand the scope of communication with New Media tools, thus truly becoming the fragrance of hidden wine will not be buried in deep alleys.

4.6 The analysis of New Media catering marketing factors influencing customer decision making and recognition

4.6.1 The influence of women and high education background over catering marketing in Sichuan

The researcher further researched on the influence of different demographic factors over catering market based on the questionnaire survey, and found that female customers, showing more recognition of and a more welcoming attitude toward New Media, accounting for 56.18% of the purchases, had a higher purchasing power in the market. Under the market segment of education background, most customers graduated from a junior college/college or a higher educational institute, accounting for nearly 80% of the total customer population. Therefore, a Sichuan catering enterprise should conduct a market segmentation of its targeted customers and focus its targeted marketing on female customers and customers of a high education background if it wants to achieve better effects on New Media marketing.

4.6.2 The influence of topics and marketing over customers' decision making and recognition

Although different New Media platforms might vary in influence, under the development in the New Media Age, the strategy of multiple marketing on multiple New Media platforms would undoubtedly achieve better effects, reaching customers on different platforms, covering a larger customer base. As of New Media use habits, customers preferred group purchasing websites to social media, indicating even with the strategy of multiple marketing on multiple New Media platforms, a catering enterprise should prioritize to increase its influence on group purchasing websites and put its secondary marketing focus on social media. Only in this way can it achieve efficient marketing effects.

4.6.3 The influence of topics and marketing over customers' decision making and recognition

How to break away the stereotype concept that the fragrance of hidden wine will not be buried in deep alleys, and how to create catering "topics" and become "a hot selling point" and "a sought-after restaurant on the Internet" is vital for a catering enterprise. They should make use of their marketing capabilities and influences brought by New Media and fully carry out marketing activities on influential platforms such as group purchasing websites, Weibo and WeChat. With their current information resources, catering enterprises can build a bridge between Sichuan catering marketing and customers, thus penetrating customers' consumption habits with their own advantages and marketing habits.

4.6.4 The influence of participation and experience over customers' decision making and recognition

Table 14 and Figure 10 indicated that more respondents had started to care about consumption experiences, pointing another marketing direction for a Sichuan catering enterprise to work on in the New Media Age - to increase the participation in dining, thus to provide customers with better experiences. When dining, customers tend to take photos

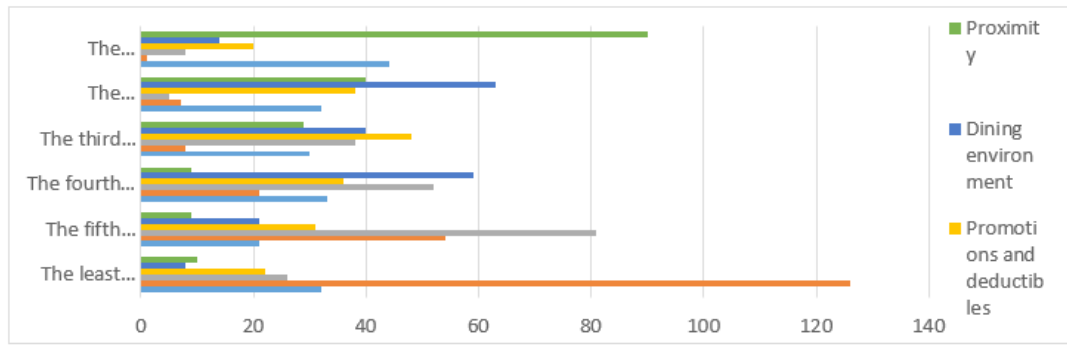


Figure 12: The Distribution Diagram of Factors Influencing Visiting A Restaurant Again

of their dishes and make a comment on them. Meanwhile, promotions and deductibles could increase customers' active participation, another important factor influencing customers' decision making. A Sichuan catering enterprise should flexibly make use of promotions and deductibles to increase customers' participation and improve their dining experiences. Only in this way will they attract more customers with their nice comments.

4.6.5 The influence of different dining tastes and customization over customers' decision making

The data in Table 15 and Figure 12 indicated that for customers, the most influencing factor for them to visit a restaurant again was the taste of dishes, which was quite reasonable as customers go to restaurants to eat, and the good taste of dishes will develop a consumption habit in them. However, this research only focused on New Media and catering marketing. How to combine catering marketing with the taste improvement of dishes is another topic named customized catering, a new marketing strategy. Just as the saying goes, it is difficult to cater to everyone's taste. It's easy to make a taste that nobody finds fault in it, but it will be quite difficult to make a taste that everyone finds yummy. Therefore, to improve the taste of dishes that cater to customers, a catering enterprise should customize the taste based on different customers' demands. Customized catering can be combined with a new marketing strategy, namely to attract targeted customers with different dish combos and dining themes, thus to achieve better New Media marketing effects.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on such problems faced by catering enterprises with Sichuan regional characteristics as catering brands at home and abroad marching into Sichuan for a grab of market share, rising cost, the conflict of regional dining habit and the current food consumption concept, this research applied Philip Kotler "11P" marketing theory, analyzed Sichuan customers with 4Ps - product, place, probing and partitioning and developed New Media marketing strategies for Sichuan catering enterprises, such as pinpointing markets and customer groups, choosing high multiple media platforms of high efficiency, enhancing customer participation and experience, customizing marketing strategies. From the above research conclusions and questionnaire survey, the author found that New Media marketing strategies are both an opportunity and a challenge for Sichuan catering enterprises.

Firstly, new media can motivate customers to obtain food information with tools such as group purchasing websites and social media, and choose the food they prefer. Meanwhile, customers obtain information from recommendations from friends. Therefore, to some extent, New Media can recommend unknown catering enterprises to more customers with its functions, allowing catering enterprises to make progress in marketing. Secondly, for a catering enterprise, the biggest selling point is its products. As of New Media marketing, customers are usually impressed with a catering enterprise on its sound food and service quality, diversified dishes and reasonable food price. Therefore, for a Sichuan catering enterprise, its products should be of high quality with regional characteristics, and unique enough to stand out from other products. Therefore, attaching importance to the selling points of its products is a key for a catering enterprise to develop. Thirdly, when a Sichuan catering enterprise is analyzing and developing New Media marketing strategies, it is also conducting an in depth analysis on itself and the entire industry. Only by keeping up with the times, paying attention to the information of social development and its peers and analyzing different factors influencing customers' dining decisions will a catering enterprise seize the opportunity for future development.

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