

Research on the Optimization of Marketing Strategy of Tea Enterprises in Zunyi, Guizhou Province[†]

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Abstract

China is the birthplace of green tea, and also the world's largest consumer and producer of tea, and Guizhou Province plays an important role in China's tea industry. Even in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and the adverse impact of the macroeconomic situation, Guizhou tea industry still showed a strong momentum of development in 2020. This paper focuses on the optimization of marketing strategy of tea enterprises in the development of Guizhou tea industry. The following research questions are put forward: What are the demographic characteristics of tea consumers in Zunyi, Guizhou Province; what are the attitudes and preferences of tea consumers in Zunyi, Guizhou Province; how satisfied are tea consumers in Zunyi, Guizhou Province with the quality, price, and variety of tea products; what are the potential opportunities and strategies for tea enterprises in Zunyi, Guizhou Province to improve their marketing and expand their market share?

From the collection and analysis of questionnaires, there are differences between men and women in Zunyi city Guizhou province who have both online consumption experience and offline consumption experience. Male consumers of tea are much more than female consumers. The ages of tea consumers are between 26 - 45 and 46 - 55 years. Education distribution accounts for more than two-thirds of those who have received a bachelor's degree or above. For the middle- and high-income groups with a monthly income of 4,001 - 8,000 yuan and 8,001 - 12,000 yuan, is the main consumer group of tea purchase.

The data analysis results of are generally unsatisfactory, among which product promotion activities, tasting activities, product information access channels, and the linkage between online and offline channels have the lowest average professional satisfaction of sales staff. Women are less satisfied with pricing strategies and channel strategies, and have a large gap with men.

Keywords: Optimization, Marketing strategy, Tea enterprises, Zunyi Guizhou

Introduction

China is the birthplace of green tea, and also the world's largest consumer and producer of tea, and Guizhou Province plays an important role in China's tea industry. Even in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and the adverse impact of the macroeconomic situation, Guizhou tea industry still showed a strong momentum of development in 2020.

According to the "2020 Guizhou Tea Industry Development Report" released by Guizhou Academy of Social Sciences in February 2021, the total area of tea plantations was 47.4769 million mu, an increase of 1.4982 million mu year on year, with a growth rate of 3.26 %. Among them, the tea garden planting area in Guizhou province ranks the first in China. The national output of dry hair tea is 2.986 million tons, the total output value is 262.658 billion yuan, the output increased by 6.9 %, the output value increased 9.62 %, the output of dry hair tea in Guizhou province, and the sales volume of dry hair tea ranks first in China. Guiyang Customs inspection and quarantine export tea of 6577.7 tons, the value of 231 million US dollars, up 91.7 % year on year (Jin, 2021). With tea garden area and dry wool tea production sales, in contrast, Guizhou tea sales, export quantity and amount, compared with the other 18 tea provinces, in the

[†]Presented at the Conference in Management: Summer 2023 (June 17, 2023 at Walailak University, Thailand)

medium level, that the tea marketing of Guizhou and other tea provinces have certain gap, so the study of tea marketing in Guizhou province has certain practical significance.

At present, the Wuling Mountain area with Zunyi and Tongren as the core has become the new core area of green tea in China. By the end of 2020, there were about 5,746 tea processing enterprises and cooperatives in Guizhou province. There are 4 million people working in the tea industry, which has helped 137,000 people in Guizhou to successfully get themselves out of poverty, and helped 452,000 poor households get into jobs. To sum up, the tea industry has contributed a lot in the process of building a moderately prosperous society in Guizhou, and it will also play an important role in the next strategy of realizing common prosperity and rural revitalization.

According to the Regulations on the Development of the Tea Industry in Guizhou Province, during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Guizhou province will focus on creating the “5 business cards” of wine, tobacco, tea, ethnic medicine and tourism. The first batch of 10 public brands in Guizhou province have been launched: “Duyun Maojian”, “Meitan Green Bud”, “Emerald stone”, “Zunyi Red”, “Fanjing Mountain Tea”, “Fenggang Zinc and Selenium Tea”, “Shiqian moss Tea”, “Leishan Silver Ball Tea”, “Waterfall Maofeng” and “Zheng’an White Tea” have been launched. In the past, the tea industry was an important pillar industry in poverty alleviation in Guizhou, which has made a great contribution to the realization of the first centenary plan. Now, the tea industry is also an important industry for rural revitalization in our province. To create a good business environment and policy support environment for Guizhou tea industry is of great significance to accelerating the modernization of Guizhou's agriculture and rural areas and realizing the strategic construction of national rural revitalization and common prosperity (Leng et al., 2021).

Literature review

Tea production in Guizhou Province has a long history, and Zunyi is one of the major tea-producing regions in the province. However, the development of the tea industry in Zunyi faces various challenges, such as market competition, product quality, and marketing strategy. Therefore, it is essential to optimize the marketing strategy of tea enterprises to improve their competitiveness and market share. This literature review will discuss the relevant theories and research on marketing strategy, consumer behavior, and tea industry in China to provide insights for the research on the optimization of marketing strategy of tea enterprises in Zunyi, Guizhou Province.

Marketing strategy

Marketing strategy is a critical element for the success of any business, including tea enterprises. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), marketing strategy is a set of actions that a business uses to achieve its objectives by satisfying customers' needs and wants better than its competitors. The marketing strategy includes four elements, known as the four Ps: Product, price, place, and promotion. The product element focuses on developing and designing products that meet the customers' needs and wants. The price element determines the price that customers are willing to pay for the product. The place element focuses on distributing the product to the target customers. The promotion element includes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and personal selling to communicate the product's benefits to the customers.

Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is another critical factor that affects the marketing strategy of tea enterprises. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants. Consumer behavior is influenced by various factors, such as personal factors, psychological factors, social factors, and cultural factors. Personal factors include age, gender, income, education, and occupation. Psychological factors include motivation, perception, learning, and attitudes. Social factors include family, friends, and reference groups. Cultural factors include values, beliefs, and customs.

Tea industry in China

Tea is an essential beverage in China, with a long history and rich culture. According to Chen and Li (2019), China is the largest tea producer and consumer in the world, accounting for over 40 % of global tea production and consumption. The tea industry is an essential part of the Chinese economy, providing employment and income for millions of people. The tea industry in China faces various challenges, such as market competition, product quality, and branding. The government has implemented various policies and initiatives to support the development of the tea industry, such as the National Tea Industry Revitalization Plan and the China Tea Marketing Association.

Methodology

As per the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, in 2020, the total population of Zunyi was approximately 7.2 million. Tea is a popular beverage in Guizhou province, and it is likely that a significant portion of the population in Zunyi consumes tea regularly. The sample size for this study is derived from sample size determinant table from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which is 384 for the current study.

This study adopts quantitative research method. Data will be collected by using questionnaires. Questionnaire is a fast, efficient and low-cost method for large sample size information collection, as this study used questionnaires as research tool. Because the variables and assumptions are clearly defined prior to data collection, quantitative study designs are often more appropriate for current studies to measure variables. The setting of the study was not artificially designed as the study was not influenced by any environmental factors or any manipulation. Respondents should voluntarily answer the questionnaires without manipulation and the interference from the researchers. This paper considers the framework of 4Cs and 4Ps theoretical questionnaire design to collect the basic customer information and tea consumption information, aiming to take the questionnaire analysis results as the support of the subsequent market segmentation, the target market selection and the marketing strategy optimization suggestions. The outstanding problem that consumers are not satisfied with the tea enterprises on the market is the problem that the tea enterprises need to focus on improving, and focus on solving the needs of consumers. The questionnaire (see appendix) includes the following parts:

Descriptive questionnaire: designed around the 4P theory, mainly involves the basic information and purchase information, including gender, age, education, monthly income, occupation, the main types of tea, each kind of purchase specific varieties, annual consumption, tea price, purchase channels, and access to information channels.

Satisfaction scale: Using the Likert scale. The scales use 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively as “very dissatisfied”, “dissatisfied”, “neutral”, “satisfied” and “very satisfied”, The Likert scale is suitable for digging deep into a deep subject, This paper aims to combine the 4Ps and 4Cs theory to guide tea enterprises to optimize the marketing strategy, so the consumption experience of tea buyers is divided into four dimensions.

In this survey, the pilot study was first carried out in a small scope, and 30 valid questionnaires were collected. The rationality of the survey design was tested through the pilot study, and the content of the questionnaire was further modified and improved, and the final questionnaire was formed. The survey data was collected from September 2022 to October 2022. After removing the invalid questionnaires, 341 valid questionnaires were finally obtained.

Results and discussion

Results

The result indicates that 96 female consumers accounted for 28.15 %, and 245 male consumers accounted for 71.85 %. It stated that male consumers are the main consumption force of tea in Zunyi, Guizhou province. According to the questionnaire, the tea consumer groups in Zunyi, Guizhou province are mainly 26 - 55 years old. People with high academic degree are the main tea consumers, and it shows that consumers have received higher education are more likely to have the habit of drinking tea. The

result also shows that the main consumer group of tea consumption is the middle-income group whose monthly income is between 4,001 to 8,000 RMB (approximately 20,000 - 40,000 Baht). The career structure of consumers shows that consumers with stable occupations are the main consumer groups, among which the government officials account for 32.25 %, the employees of state-owned enterprises account for 30.21 %, and the employees of private enterprises account for 26.1 %. These consumers have tea drinking environment and have large demands for tea consumption.

The result shows that tea consumers in Zunyi prefer green tea accounted for 45.92 %, followed by black tea accounted for 18.47 %, and followed by oolong tea and white tea, accounted for nearly 16.47 % and 13.64 %, respectively; finally is black tea accounted for 5.49 %, Zunyi tea consumers generally more accustomed to drinking green tea, and green tea sales in Guizhou tea market still occupies the most important position.

The result also shows that the subdivided tea varieties of the six major tea categories are the tea types sold or have a certain famous tea types in the Zunyi tea market, among the most popular green tea categories of Zunyi tea consumers, Maojian tea accounted for 50.96 %, Green bud accounted for 26.11 %, Emerald accounted for 12.10 %, Other Guizhou green tea accounted for 6.37 %, Green tea from outside the province is 4.46 %. According to the data Zunyi local tea is still the main choice of Zunyi consumers, it shows very strong competitiveness in the Zunyi tea market. Green tea from outside the province is hard to enter the market. Zunyi red tea is the most consumers' preference.

The result shows that the largest consumption amount is middle-grade tea between 401 to 700 per 500 g, accounting for 34.02 %. Secondly, 21.7 % between 701 - 1100 per 500 g (approximately 3,500 - 5,500 Baht per 500 g), and 13.78 %, respectively, indicating that with the development of economy and income, tea consumption also increases, although there is still a gap in Zunyi tea market compared with first-tier cities in China.

The result shows that the largest annual purchase consumption is between 1.5 - 2 kg annually, accounting for nearly half of 46.33 %, between 1 - 1.5 kg accounted for 24.93 %, and below 1 kg and more than 2 kg accounted for 21.99 % and 6.74, respectively, indicating that the number of tea purchased by tea consumers in Zunyi is not that much, and tea does not belong to fast selling agricultural products.

The result shows that consumers most often buy tea from tea brand specialty stores, which accounted for 36.95 % of the total, the second is the general tea stores accounted for 28.16 %, and the third is the online sales platform, accounted for 22.87 %. It can be seen that the brand reliability and professionalism delivered by the exclusive stores are more attractive to tea consumers.

The result shows that the main online channels of consumers purchasing tea are T-mall platform accounting for 33.16 %, Taobao platform accounting for 27.85 %, Pinduoduo platform accounting for 27.5 %, and JD platform accounting for 19.06 %. Because Tmall is generally a brand flagship store, it is easier to win the trust of consumers, and the other three platform are mainstream online shopping platforms for Chinese consumers.

The result shows that nowadays WeChat, TikTok, Weibo advertising, new media advertising accounted for the majority of the advertising, the traditional print advertising, TV advertising and other traditional channels accounted for low percentage. Consumers prefer getting information from new media.

Discussion

Product-Consumer Integrated Marketing Strategy

According to the questionnaire, consumers in Zunyi, Guizhou province consume green tea, with the highest price between 401 - 700 and 701 - 1,100 yuan per 500 g. Based on the above three conditions, the core products are mid-range green tea and high-grade green tea. Specifically, one bud and one leaf middle and high-end Shangpin series Fanjing cui peak and clean product series fanjing cui bud, 1 bud and 2 leaf and 1 bud and 3 leaf middle end Wo wood series Fanjing hair peak. According to the questionnaire results show that the black tea is Guizhou, Guizhou consumers like several mature black tea regions in Guizhou, the company can use the way of cooperation with mature processing factory, buy high-end black tea products for OEM sales, to make up for the loss of the green tea customers in the market.

Pricing-cost integrated marketing strategy

Cost not only refers to the enterprise cost and consumer financial cost, consumers should also include the time cost, energy cost, etc., and the invisible cost can be compensated by perfect service, enterprises need according to the needs of customers constantly change business concept, improve the service consciousness, explore to adapt to the development trend of modern economy and society of marketing way.

1) Optimize the competitive and cost-oriented pricing strategy

Enterprises can provide consumers with higher cost-effective products by reducing costs and increasing output, so as to reduce their own cost and reduce the purchasing cost of customers. According to the data of the sampling survey, the consumption amount of the sampled population is the largest proportion between 401 - 700 and 701 - 1,100 per 500 g, and most of this tea can be produced by machine. The production process and update the construction of production line, although update equipment need to take up the enterprise within a certain period of time, but with the update of production technology and machine iteration, will lead to production efficiency, improve machine production efficiency can improve production and reduce the use of personnel, automatic production line does not need too many operators, only need technical personnel in each key link of quality review and control, further reduce the production costs.

2) Improve services and strengthen the cognition-oriented pricing strategy

According to the questionnaire results, the crowd of the tea consumption education classification, received higher education population accounted for the most, this kind of people pay more attention to the product besides the use value of cultural value and emotional value, so for tea enterprises, tea culture value and based on culture derived service is more likely to be accepted by the mainstream consumer groups, the company can through consumer higher cognitive oriented to optimize the pricing strategy. At the same time, according to the questionnaire results, most consumers are not satisfied with the price increase phenomenon. Simple cost-oriented pricing method is too rigid, the traditional pricing method in variable cost rise, most consumers are not accept, or not price profit margins is compressed, or price companies may need to bear the risk of loyal customers, the main reason of the dilemma is that enterprises did not consider the pricing combined with consumer cognition of additional value, can improve profits while shaping products and corporate image, cost improvement or quality upgrade need to price products, can be made up through additional services. Combined with STP analysis of the product market positioning, highlight the “rare, organic, healthy” product positioning, due to its scarcity, and high quality, can increase the price of providing tea culture related services, through regular for the company customer knowledge lectures on tea culture, tea art workshops, baking classroom enhance added value for the product. In addition, value-added services in line with customers’ hobbies can enhance the added value of the product, strengthen the connection with customers, offset some of the risk of losing customers after the price increase, and improve the cognitive value of products in the hearts of customers.

3) Customer classification, maintenance of input cost, product pricing differentiation

Different priced products should be targeted at different target customer companies, In the daily operations, tea enterprises should strengthen customer management. It is classified according to the value that customers create for the company. Make the corresponding pricing products according to the different cost purchase habits. 1) achieves win-win pricing strategies. Customers are loyal and high-value customers, this type of customer has 2 main characteristics. Have a certain degree of loyalty to the brand and have a certain degree of consumption power, And the major profit maker of the company’s retail business. In the process of maintaining a class of customers, more emphasis is placed on the whole process of personalized services, enhance customers’ cognitive value of products, high-end tea is not only a product available for these customers, Need company needles to sexually increase customer relationship maintenance costs, To maintain customer loyalty while maintaining a high product pricing. 2) class customer is a certain consumption ability but no loyalty customers or consumption ability, but have certain loyalty customers, have certain consumption ability but no loyalty of this type of customer companies need to increase investment in the cost of sales, and create more cognitive value for them, to further strengthen its loyalty. Consumption ability general customer main cost is relatively fixed, will not

increase with the increase in the number of additional services. 3) three customers is consumption ability and the brand, loyalty is not strong customers, such customer cognitive value for them, the impact of product value and pricing will be significantly less than first class and second class users, this type of customers suitable for their product pricing to fully reflect the use value of high cost, in other aspects of cost should be weakened accordingly.

4) Strictly manage offline and online prices, implement standardized prices and consistent promotional activities

Due to the lack of professional e-commerce team to manage the company's online sales channels, online and offline prices are not unified, and promotion and activities are not consistent with offline products. The company should strengthen the management of the unified pricing of the offline stores and the online stores, and the offline stores should pay special attention to avoid the sales staff from eating the price difference, which will not only lead to the loss of corporate profits but also lead to the damage of the corporate brand image. Online channel prices should be updated in time to ensure that the prices of all channels are consistent. Unified pricing can increase consumers 'identity with the brand and products, and increase users' confidence in buying. Needless to worry about reducing the value of buying their products in another place, and further increase user loyalty.

5) Targeted improvement - customers with a high school education or below

After the difference of the questionnaire analysis, found that the high school degree below customer pricing satisfaction at the lowest and other degree crowd difference is larger, this kind of customers although degree is lower, but the income is not necessarily low, the main characteristics of cultural literacy compared with other degree crowd is lower, is not easy to accept tea culture and substantial service product premium situation. For this part of the customer need to cooperate on product strategy and pricing strategy, simple packaging or do not need to packaging, taste good but poor shape of tea, can machine mass production of tea and no value-added services and cultural characteristics of products, compared with the quality of other products pricing is lower, on the premise of ensuring the quality of product use value and high cost performance, more likely to be accepted by high school education customers.

Channel-convenient integrated marketing strategy

1) Transition from offline specialty stores to offline experience stores

According to the difference analysis found that received higher education compared with other degree groups other degree for Guizhou tea sales channels, such people are more likely to accept high-end products and new sales methods, as people's income increases, followed by consumption upgrade, and the product is different from the traditional agricultural products, it has strong cultural attributes and certain identity attributes, buying good experience will greatly increase consumer desire to buy, so the company currently offline eight stores, can choose to upgrade from stores to experience stores. According to the STP theory target market selection analysis, tea main target consumers is male customers, offline store design can provide independent space, equipped with professional ability, good professional tea master image service, from simple and elegant decoration, simple product manual, conform to the male shopping habits of process design, etc., make shopping and experience both, and promote the brand image upgrade, further optimize the offline channels.

2) Expand offline sales channels

In addition to its own stores and experience stores, tea enterprises can also cooperate with large supermarkets, tourist attractions specialty sales stores and wedding companies. When large supermarkets store their products, it can give the company brand greater exposure opportunities and increase sales opportunities.

Promotion-Communication and integrated marketing strategy

1) Improve the advertising and sales promotion methods to achieve accurate sales promotion

From the results of the questionnaire, Consumers learn nearly 60 % of the information about tea sales through advertisements on new media platforms. It shows that the traditional print advertising method can

no longer meet the advertising needs. The main consumers of tea are 26 - 45 and 46 - 55. The favorite social tools for consumers in this age group are Wechat and TikTok. 1) company advertising can choose to cooperate with these platforms, and the above platforms have targeted big data analysis, accurate advertising services, intrusive advertising to potential customers to the circle of friends and short videos, click to directly enter the purchase link to purchase. 2) according to the STP theory market positioning analysis, the company choose the target customer group is a certain economic ability of professional groups, so the company's offline advertising needs according to the product consumer positioning to upgrade and streamline, offline advertising should be more targeted in high-end office buildings, high-end residential area, high-end shopping center of the elevator and parking lot.

2) Improve the professional level of marketing personnel

Strengthen personnel professional training, through the status of the questionnaire analysis found that consumers in Guizhou tea market marketing staff average professional satisfaction is unsatisfactory, and the difference analysis shows that highly educated crowd compared with other degree crowd the most unsatisfactory part including the enterprise promotion, the characteristics of the customer cultural quality is higher, work rigorous, value experience and respect, they tend to pay more attention to sales staff professional degree, if the salesman is not professional will make them desire to buy products. Tea sales personnel in the actual sales process should not only know the basic situation of the goods, in view of the characteristics of tea as this commodity, but also need other skills to become a qualified tea sales personnel. 1) requires the sales staff to have a certain cultural heritage, especially the understanding of tea culture and tea knowledge. 2) tea art is also an important skill, which is a comprehensive display of the tea art elements such as the expression, action and posture of the sales staff. 3) master certain communication skills, have a good ability, can quickly understand the basic information of consumers and insight into consumer demand, good interaction with consumers, in the whole sales and service process let consumers feel like spring breeze, comprehensive above elements can greatly increase, promote the probability of success, and cooperate with consumer demand highly matching products, can further increase consumer desire to buy again. This requires a high comprehensive ability of the sales personnel. No matter how good the products are, the good sales personnel need to let the customers know them. At this time, the company needs to pay attention to the pre-job training, regular training and regular assessment of the employees, and consumers provide professional and high-quality purchase services.

3) Membership system classification and promotion methods, innovative promotion activities

Promotion activities fixed, easy to cause consumer fatigue, is not conducive to stimulate consumers to repeat consumption, give consumers membership and matching corresponding promotion means, not only to attract consumers a shopping, but also to increase contact with consumers through membership, constantly through membership rights to deepen consumer impression of the brand, in addition to let consumers keep fresh, to let consumers have demand first think of products, further promote consumption again, realize sustainable development of long-term bilateral relationship.

Membership design is as follows: 1) ordinary members: one-time consumption of 3,000 yuan or a year cumulative consumption of 4,000 yuan, 2 years from the date of membership card can enjoy the following promotions: monthly 7th consumption, full 9.5 fold, urban free home delivery, new shelves, tea to the store free try, every 1 yuan 1 points, points can be used for tea, tea and other store specified products. 2) silver card members: A 1-time consumption of 6,000 yuan or a year of cumulative consumption of 8,000 yuan, in addition to the full coverage of ordinary card members, 2 years to enjoy any time shopping can enjoy a 10 % discount. 3) gold card members: 1-time consumption of more than 10,000 or a cumulative consumption of more than 20,000 in a year, in addition to enjoying all the rights and interests of silver card members, enjoy all products 8.5 % discount within 2 years. "Adopt one mu" customized tea customers every year free, accompanied to the tea garden for investigation. 4) Diamond Member: Customers with annual consumption of more than 200,000 yuan are mainly group customers such as enterprises and institutions, in addition to enjoying all the rights and interests of gold card members, and give certain cash rebates. At the same time, all company members can participate in the tea party, tea culture seminar, tea art training class and other activities held by the company.

Recommendations

The utilities of the new model could be pointed out in the following:

1) Economic benefits: The optimization of marketing strategy of tea enterprises in Zunyi, Guizhou Province through the new model could lead to increased sales and profits, which would contribute positively to the economic development of the region. This could also lead to job creation and increased investment in the tea industry, which would have a ripple effect on the overall economy.

2) Social policy benefits: The new model could help tea enterprises to better understand the needs and preferences of their target consumers, which would lead to the production of high-quality tea products that meet the demands of the market. This could enhance consumer satisfaction and promote a positive image for the tea industry in Zunyi, Guizhou Province. Additionally, the increased sales and profits could result in better wages and working conditions for tea workers, which would have a positive impact on their social and economic well-being.

3) Technology-induced benefits: The new model could leverage digital technologies to optimize marketing strategies for tea enterprises in Zunyi, Guizhou Province. This could include the use of data analytics, social media marketing, and e-commerce platforms to reach a wider audience and increase sales. The adoption of digital technologies could also enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of tea production processes, leading to cost savings and improved quality control. Overall, the new model could spur innovation and digital transformation within the tea industry in Zunyi, Guizhou Province, leading to long-term benefits for the region's economy and society.

Conclusions

Chinese tea culture has a long history, and tea is deeply loved by Chinese and foreign consumers. There are more than 70,000 tea enterprises all over the country, but the concentration of tea industry brands is not high and the market competition is fierce. If tea enterprises want to seek better development in the new economic situation, they must consider the new way to formulate and implement enterprises' development strategies. This research analyzes the general situation of Zunyi tea market in Guizhou province, and points out the problems in the development of Zunyi tea industry. The research uses strategic management tools to analyze the external and internal environment in details, finds out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Zunyi tea enterprises through SWOT analysis, and suggests practical strategies for tea enterprises in Zunyi, Guizhou province.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Associate Professor Dr. Jeerakiat Apibunyopas, who devoted his precious time and energy to give me care and patience, so that I was able to complete the overall content of this thesis. I am deeply grateful for the responsibility and encouragement I received to write the thesis successfully.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my friends who gave me guidance and help during my postgraduate study.

Finally, I also want to thank my family, with their support and help, I am more firmly on the road of graduate school. During my postgraduate year, their help and encouragement also enabled me to stick to the end.

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