



Marketing Strategy of Brokerage Business of Shanxi Securities Company, China

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Abstract

Research objectives were to explore the industry competition environment that Shanxi Securities Company (SSC) faced in developing brokerage business. Defined the Company's competitive advantages marketing strategy by TOWS Matrix. Result found: marketing status: Product and Quotation Strategy; Customer Relationship Management Strategy; Marketing Channel Strategy. The Problems Existing in the Marketing: Vague Product Positioning; Low Customer Willingness to Pay; Low Brand Awareness; Customers were not satisfied with service staffs. The Analysis on the Causes of the Marketing Problems in the Brokerage Business: Lack of Scientific Product Analysis System; Single Product Quotation; High-level Neglect of Online Channel Construction.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy; Brokerage Business

Introduction

Shanxi Securities Company (SSC) is the well-established securities company in China. It was established in 1988, and grew gradually with China's domestic securities market in its early stage. In 2015, its operating income reached 3.84 billion Yuan and its net profit was 1.44 billion Yuan. However, in 2020, its operating income and net profit dropped to 3.34 billion Yuan and 730 million Yuan, respectively. In the meanwhile, China is opening its financial market to the world. Foreign financial service companies, such as UBS Securities, JP Morgan Securities (China) and Nomura Oriental International Securities, have opened their offices in China (Chen Bo: 2018, Chen Jingni: 2020; Li Yaodong: 2020). With their advanced technology, management style and high-quality financial service, foreign securities companies also brought fierce competition with SSC (Feng Minghua, Hu Xiangbin, Xiong Shuang, et al: 2018).

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In this context, this research focused on the marketing strategy of SSC's brokerage business, summarized the deficiencies of SSC's brokerage business development, and put forward suggestions for SSC to improve its brokerage business marketing strategy based on the company's development strategy and changes in the securities industry environment.

Statement of Problems

The brokerage business of a securities company referred to the business in which a securities company accepted the entrustment of clients and trades securities on behalf of clients according to their requirements. With the information of Securities trading in China, major securities dealers also mainly rely on information systems to help customers complete securities trading (Ma Guangti, 2006), but the process of securities trading was rather straightforward and the requirements for information systems were not high. There was no significant difference in the quality of the economic services provided by many securities companies, which led customers to choose securities companies with low commission ratio. Since 2001, SSC has launched a price war in the brokerage business. By 2011, the brokerage business of securities companies had become overly competitive, and the low commission ratio began to affect the normal development of the securities industry (Zhang Zhe, 2011). However, from 2011 to 2020, the average commission rate of Chinese securities companies further decreased from 0.64‰ to 0.3‰, further impacting the profitability of securities companies.

Research Objectives

The Specific Objectives of this Study were as Follows: (1) to understand the macro environment and industry competition environment that SSC faces in developing brokerage business, (2) to Define the internal resources of SSC, and point out the advantages and disadvantages of SSC. Define the Company's competitive advantages and areas for improvement, (3) to put forward feasible brokerage business marketing strategy for SSC.



Scope of the Study

The research contents and survey samples involved in the research scope were summarized as follows: **Scope of Contents:** This paper only studies the relevant content of SSC's brokerage business marketing in China, including the macro environment of brokerage business and the competitive environment of the industry are limited in mainland China. Finally, the brokerage business marketing strategy proposed in this paper mainly serves SSC.

Population and Samples: This paper conducts a questionnaire survey on SSC's brokerage customers, and evaluates the product problems, pricing problems and promotion problems in the brokerage business from the perspective of customers, so as to better understand the deficiencies of SSC's brokerage business marketing. A questionnaire survey is conducted on 400 existing customers (Yamane formula). Qualification of sampling is selected by stratified sampling which based on customers' investment account balance. When selecting customer samples, this paper adopts stratified sampling. According to the classification of customer account capital, 100 customers of SSC with less than 100,000 Yuan, between 100,000 Yuan and 1 million Yuan and more than 1 million Yuan will be selected each. Online questionnaire but specific only customers of SSC. The result from the IOC test for this quantitative research method was 0.85, it is more than 0.7. Thus the all designed questions of this quantitative method are acceptable, the content validity can be guaranteed, too. Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.944 which was high reliability, and it was considered that the questionnaire was above 0.80 or even greater than 0.90, the questionnaire can be considered to have excellent reliability.

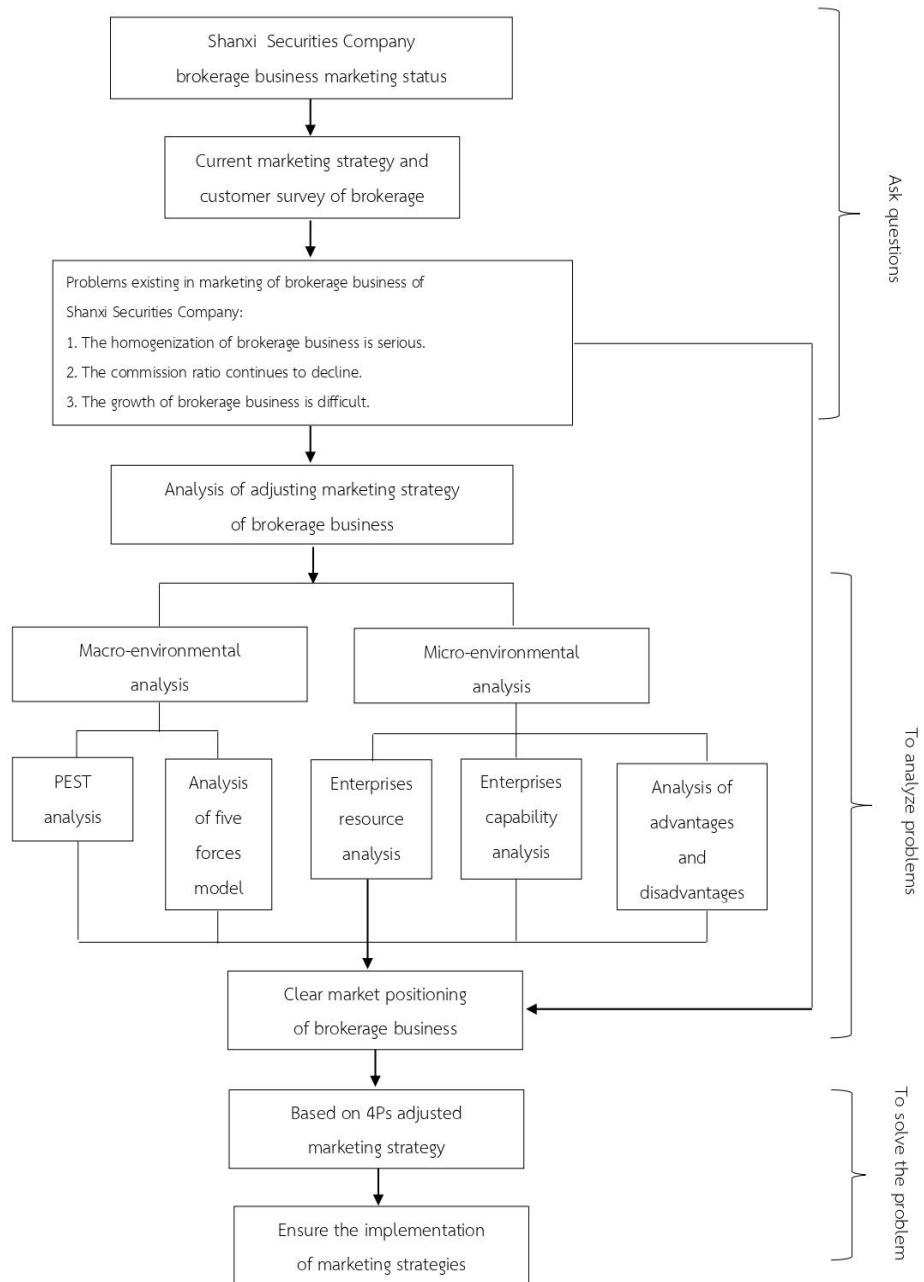


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Results

The Existing Marketing Strategy of SSC's Brokerage Business.

As a virtual service, factors such as product quality and pricing, but also paid special attention to customer experience. This article discusses the marketing status of SSC's brokerage business from the following aspects.

Product and Quotation Strategy. The brokerage business of SSC can be simply divided into online products and offline products. Offline products refer to customers who need to go to SSC's business outlets to handle business. The initial commission rate for customers who open an account in the offline business department is usually between 0.2% and 3%, which varies greatly. Customers could negotiate the price with the account manager to reduce the commission rate to less than 0.5%. In addition, offline clients would receive more attention from account managers and could obtain more diverse brokerage services. For online products, in order to attract online customers from across the country, Shanxi Securities Co., Ltd. often directly agreed to a lower rate of brokerage commission, usually 0.3%. SSC was not very enthusiastic about online customer service, and online customers have ever used the APP to conduct business in a self-service manner.

Customer Relationship Management Strategy. At the moment, SSC has formed a set of new customer development procedures and a relatively complete system. This article briefly introduces the main sales process of SSC. The first stage of mining requirements mainly included collecting customer information, mining customer needs, and establishing customer relationships. The second stage identified customer needs, classifies customer needs, analyzes whether customer needs were rigid or potential needs, and adopts different customer relationship maintenance methods on this basis. The third stage was to sign a contract, requiring sales staff to provide customers with account opening suggestions based on their actual needs, risk appetite, asset status, etc., and to offer customers a quote. Then the two parties confirm the specific terms, and after reaching an agreement, the contract was officially signed and sealed. The fourth stage was after-sales service. After-sales service mainly requires sales staff to regularly take follow-up calls, evaluation forms and other methods to return visits to understand the degree of customer satisfaction with brokerage services and to further develop new customer needs.

Marketing Channel Strategy. SSC's marketing channels are relatively simple, mainly through Baidu search and Sina Weibo to attract traffic. As a local securities company, Shanxi Securities Co., Ltd. had relatively weak financial strength, and its willingness to use funds for advertising and marketing was not strong. At present, Shanxi Securities Co. had adopted relatively conservative marketing measures. Word-of-mouth communication was another marketing channel of SSC. Less than 10% of SSC's customers came from word-of-mouth marketing. However, these customers were more loyal and willing to pay. They were an extremely important source of high-quality customers.

Analysis of questionnaire data:

In recent years, the brokerage business of SSC had been stagnant, and the proportion of brokerage business in total revenue had continued to decline, which also shown that the company's brokerage business had relatively low market competitiveness in the industry. We take SSC's brokerage business clients as the research object, and through questionnaire surveys and combining with SSC's internal data, we analyze the problems and causes of SSC's brokerage business marketing.

Questionnaire: Purpose of the Survey:

The demographic characteristics of the sample. In terms of gender distribution, 64.5% of the users participating in the survey were male, which indicates that male users had a stronger preference for securities investment, and male customers account for a higher proportion. In terms of age distribution, the group between 31 and 60 years old was the main group of users of Shanxi Securities Companies, accounting for 84.1% in this survey. In fact, securities investment had certain requirements for individual assets and physical conditions. People between 31 and 60 years old have certain assets that could be used for securities investment, and at the same time have good intelligence and cognitive ability to deal with the fluctuations of the complicated securities market, which made this part of the age group become the main group of the brokerage business of SSC. In terms of education level, those with junior college or undergraduate degree account for 53.4%, and those with graduate degree or above account for 24.2%, showing the characteristics of high education among users of SSC. In terms of monthly income, users with a monthly income of 5,000 Yuan or less accounted for only 16.1%. Most users had a relatively high-income level, which was related to the capital threshold of securities investment. In general, it could be found that the



users of SSC's brokerage business had shown the characteristics of masculinity, high education and high income. Analysis of user consumption characteristics: The frequency of use of customer service of SSC by most users was relatively low. 47.4% of users used the service less than once a month, indicating low frequency of use. This shown that users only choose to use SSC supporting customer services when they had special needs, less brokerage business supporting services as an important auxiliary tool for their securities investment. Only 7.5% of customers chosen to use the client business of SSC every week. The mobile application provided by the company had a number of functions such as market information push, customer asset statistics, and speculation hot spot analysis and so on, which could provide dynamic securities investment suggestions for customers. Customers need to log in the application every day for interaction. However, the number of customers who frequently used these customer services was relatively small. In addition, 28.6% of customers choose to use customer service once a month. Stock and futures brokerage business and research business were favored by customers, with approval rates of 42.0% and 36.9% respectively. The stock and futures brokerage business was mainly to push relevant advice, facilitate the trading of customers. The research business was the in-depth research of SSC's analysts on listed companies, including financial status analysis, core competitiveness analysis and so on, which had a good reference value for long-term investment customers. The proportion of fund business and financial derivatives business was 16.5% and 4.7% respectively, and the recognition degree of these two businesses was low. In fact, the customer was engaged in the financial derivatives, had higher technical threshold, also need to account manager for the product had high familiarity with risk and trading rules, SSC in the aspects of talent reserve was relatively weak, financial derivatives trading for the customer service ability was relatively poor, number of customers more normal.

The Problems Existing in the Marketing of the Brokerage Business of Shanxi Securities Companies.

Vague Product Positioning. From the perspective of product system, SSC could provide customers with services such as information push, basic investment risk analysis, and securities transaction business through mobile application, Internet and telephone. After 2018, mobile applications had also begun to integrate functions such as fund purchases, investment portfolios, and smart stock selection,

and provide more diversified customer services, indicating the ambition of Shanxi Securities to develop into a comprehensive securities company. However, the products provided by SSC to consumers are different from ordinary Internet companies. Most Internet companies only need to provide their customers with a few standardized products. Although the product development cost was high, the marginal cost of the product was very low. For example, Tencent's Glory of Kings game, Tencent did not need to provide customized game versions to different consumers, but only needs to provide all consumers with the same version of the game product. However, SSC needs to provide different investment and risk management solutions to different customers, which would make the marginal cost of SSC's products significantly higher. However, until 2020, SSC's brokerage business revenue was still developing slowly, and the proportion of brokerage business in the company's total revenue had been declining year by year, making it difficult to support a complex and diversified product system. SSC was not active in product positioning and product quality improvement of the brokerage business. It mainly provided customers with basic customer services, and customers' evaluations of its products were relatively average. Due to its own cost control and technical constraints, SSC did not provide the market with high-quality services beyond its competitors.

Low Customer Willingness to Pay. It could be found that 23.9% of customers would not purchase the value-added services of SSC. These customers were only willing to enjoy the free services of SSC's brokerage business. In addition, customers who spent less than RMB 50 per year account for 37.6% of the main population. The proportion of people spending between RMB 50 and RMB 500 was 28.6%. In addition, 9% of people spent between 500 Yuan and 2,000 Yuan. This shows that most users invested less in other aspects besides securities trading commissions. Generally speaking, if the number of users of a securities company was extremely large, even if the consumption amount of a single user was small, the enterprise could achieve a high level of operating income through the large user scale. For example, China's Oriental Fortune Securities Co., Ltd. relied on its huge user scale to achieve more than 30% growth in its brokerage business for many years. However, for SSC, providing users with value-added customer services was not only standard products, but also required a large number of excellent customer managers or securities analysts to respond to the diverse needs of users. The marginal cost of the value-added services of the brokerage business was



relatively high. If the customer's willingness to pay was too low, the company would suffer long-term losses. In the customer structure of SSC, more than 90% of customers spend less than 500 Yuan a year, and customers had low willingness to pay. It was difficult for SSC to achieve rapid growth in revenue and profits through value-added brokerage services.

Low Brand Awareness. Baidu search was an important channel for people to obtain securities services. Searching for keywords such as "account opening", "securities trading" and "low commission" on Baidu, the name of SSC could not be found in the Baidu search results on the first 10 pages, but securities companies such as Oriental Fortune could be found. It shows that SSC's reputation on the Internet was low, and most netizens did not pay attention to the brand of SSC. In the questionnaire survey of the channels through which customers understand the brand of SSC, It could be found that only 13.8% of users were Shanxi Securities companies that they learned through Baidu search, while 36.0% of users were Shanxi Securities companies that they learned through Weibo and WeChat. As of June 2021, the number of Internet users in China had exceeded 1 billion. In this survey, only 50.2% of users learned about the brand of SSC through Internet channels, which proves that SSC's brand communication on the Internet was insufficient and was not recognized by the public.

Customers were not satisfied with service staff. Among the items in the customer satisfaction survey, the weighted score of the customer's professional satisfaction with the customer manager was 3.69 points, which was the lowest score among the customer manager evaluation questions, which fully demonstrated the lack of professionalism of the customer manager of SSC. In fact, the source of SSC's customers was relatively diverse, including introductions from old customers and customers from online channels. During the consultation process, the customer would ask the customer manager some questions. If the customer manager did not understand the customer's problem, or could not give a general problem-solving direction, it would leave the customer with an unprofessional impression. The customer manager's weighted satisfaction score for the degree of participation in investment consulting projects was only 3.73 points, indicating that after the account was successfully opened, the customer manager rarely continued to participate in subsequent customer investment services. Among the questions evaluated by securities analysts, the feedback efficiency of securities

analysts in question 7 received the lowest score of 3.73. It reflected that the company's securities analysts could not provide timely and effective feedback for the problems arising in the consultation. In the interview and research of the securities analysts in SSC, the author found that the securities analysts with a seniority of 3 to 5 years had the highest efficiency of reply, and both work enthusiasm and professional level were obviously higher than those of other age groups. On the other hand, junior securities analyzed with less than three years of working experience and senior securities analysts with more than five years of working experience had a relatively long recovery period. To sum up, through the customer satisfaction survey, it could be found that the problems of SSC's service marketing mainly focus on the lack of professional and technical capabilities of customer managers and the low efficiency of feedback from securities analysts to customer problems. In order to improve the service quality of SSC and enhance its competitiveness in the market, it is necessary to fully consider the concerns and pain points of customers when formulating service marketing strategies, and eliminate the negative impressions and troubles caused by bad service experience to customers.

The Analysis on the Causes of the Marketing Problems in the Brokerage Business of Shanxi Securities Companies.

Lack of Scientific Product Analysis System. Since 2016, the income level of SSC's brokerage business had begun to stagnate. The net income of brokerage business continued to decline from 2016 to 2018, and the company's senior management ignored the improvement of brokerage product quality and the improvement of supporting services to a certain extent. Moreover, the commission ratio had no price advantage, and it relied more on old customers to contribute to the company's operating income from the brokerage business. In this regard, SSC must recognize its own shortcomings, adjust the company's product system in a timely manner through customer feedback, develop its own product features, and achieve misaligned competition with competitors.

Single Product Quotation. As mentioned above, SSC had adopted a more flexible pricing method for offline customers. However, this flexible pricing method of SSC was unreasonable. In order to obtain more commission profits, they agreed to a higher commission rate for offline customers, but gave online customers a lower commission rate of 0.3‰. If they discover this unreasonable quotation



method of SSC afterwards, they would inevitably produce dissatisfaction, which would affect the relationship between the company and its customers.

High-level Neglect of Online Channel Construction. Marketing channels were an integral part of the marketing system. As a traditional marketing channel, banks also acted as the primary channel for the brokerage business marketing of Shanxi securities companies. At present, due to the development of the Internet, many business customers could directly handle the business online, resulting in the gradual decrease of bank customers handling business at bank outlets. Relying only on banks as a channel to carry out the marketing of securities brokerage business could no longer satisfy the increasingly fierce competition in the industry. Only by establishing diversified marketing channels could the sustainable and effective development of SSC been realized.

Environmental Analysis of Shanxi Securities Brokerage Business: Marketing strategy analysis required companies to clarify the changes in the external environment, and on the premise of complying with the guidance of government policies and the trend of social and economic development, the company's brokerage business marketing strategy could be implemented.

This section mainly uses the **PEST method to analyze** the macro environment of SSC's brokerage business, which laid the foundation for the following research.

Macro Environment Analysis. If a company wanted to obtain excess profits, it needed to choose industries with excess profits. The macro environment had a great influence on its development.

Political and Legal Environment (P). The Chinese government had shown a positive attitude towards the development of brokerage business by securities companies and supports the expansion of brokerage business scale through the Internet. In March 2020, the Chinese government promulgated the revised "Securities Law of the People's Republic of China", which greatly reduced the restrictions on securities companies.

Economic Environment (E). In terms of customers' economic capabilities, Shi Jingquan (2019) had conducted statistics on the asset status of China's A-share stock accounts, and the research found that the average asset volume of investors' stock accounts is 547,000 Yuan. It shown that the asset scale of Chinese securities investors was also continuing to rise. From the perspective of the economic

environment, the number of Chinese securities investors and the scale of their assets were rising rapidly, and SSC was still facing a good economic environment in developing its brokerage business.

Social and Cultural Environment (S). With the development of the times, more and more people had begun to recognize securities investment. Liu Jingyi and others (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey on individual investors. The study found that after China entered the WTO, along with the rapid development of China's economy, China's financial securities trading industry had also become more prosperous, and the social culture's recognition of securities trading had also become higher and higher. The public's recognition of securities trading, especially stock trading, and there was a significant negative correlation between new stock investment behavior and its portfolio risk (Zhou Xuanbo, 2019).

Technical Environment (T). The vast majority of domestic investors mainly conduct securities transactions through computers and were also accustomed to obtaining online information through the Internet. Convenient and efficient information technology provided new space and methods for the brokerage business of securities companies, as well as opportunities for securities companies to establish competitive advantages. This clarifies the direction for SSC to provide customer services through the Internet.

Through the analysis of the PEST method, it was considered that the development of the brokerage business of SSC is facing an excellent policy environment and economic environment, and a good social and cultural environment and technical environment. Generally speaking, the macro environment of brokerage business was very good, and securities companies need to actively promote brokerage business.

SWOT Analysis. Through the above analysis of the macro-environment, industry competition and internal environment analysis of SSC's brokerage business, we could draw out the opportunities, threats, advantages and disadvantages of its brokerage business.

Opportunities. Through the analysis of the external macro environment, it could be found that the macro environment that SSC faced in developing its brokerage business was relatively superior. First of all, the national policy strongly supports the Internet-based development of the securities brokerage business. Secondly, the population of Chinese securities investors and the scale of investor accounts had shown a trend of accelerated growth. Thirdly, China's domestic



concept of securities investment was becoming more and more open, and a large number of individuals and investment institutions were also actively participating in securities transactions. Fourthly, the development of mobile Internet technology, artificial intelligence, big data analysis and other technologies had provided great convenience for customer service.

Threats. The continued decline in the brokerage business commission ratio was an important threat to the continued development of the brokerage business. The research shown that the development of brokerage business had an excellent macro environment, but the development of brokerage business of SSC was very slow. The main reason was that competition in the same industry was too fierce, and the commission ratio was declining year by year. Although the number of investors was increasing, the company's brokerage business income was still declining. The rapid development of Internet brokerages was another major threat to SSC. They rely on big data technology and artificial intelligence (AI) technology to realize intelligence, robot-advisor and other functions at low cost, which were extremely serious threats to traditional securities companies.

Strengths. Firstly, the advantages of state-owned assets background. SSC, with a background of state-owned assets, attaches great importance to customer compliance transactions, and could give these customers more rules and guidance to improve the security of short-term transactions for large customers. Secondly, the advantages of Shanxi's local brands. SSC had a relatively high social reputation and a good brand image in the development of more than 30 years in North China. Local consumers had high trust in SSC. Thirdly, offline customer service advantages. SSC has a securities company that attaches great importance to customer service. They had ever established many business outlets in North China, and recruited a large number of highly educated personnel as grassroots employees, which greatly improved the basic service level of the brokerage business and gave offline customers a better experience.

Weaknesses. Insufficient ability to promote new markets. SSC was a large local securities company with more than 40% of its revenue derived from Shanxi Province. As a result, SSC was bound to be greatly hindered when it promoted its brokerage business to the whole country. The business characteristics were not clear enough. SSC mainly provided customers with basic services, and the problem of homogeneity of products with other securities companies was more serious. It

was difficult to compete with leading securities companies, which was also an important reason why SSC's economic income was difficult to grow rapidly. The technical strength was relatively weak. China's securities brokerage business was rapidly Internet-based, and it had become a general trend to provide customers with various supporting services through the Internet. However, SSC did not have its own technology financial company until 2020, and it lacked talent accumulation in technology and other aspects.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the analysis of the macro environment, industry competition and internal environment of SSC's brokerage business. It pointed out that the brokerage business is facing a very good macro environment, and there was still a lot of room for development in general. In terms of industry competition, SSC's brokerage business faced extremely severe inter-industry competition, and price competition had led to very difficult brokerage business revenue and profit growth. SSC's state-owned assets background, brand image, and service capabilities had obvious advantages in Shanxi Province and even North China. However, the advantages in other regions outside of North China were not significant, and the business characteristics of enterprises were not obvious, SSC had difficulties in developing brokerage business in areas outside of North China, and it also faced more difficulties in promoting brokerage business through the Internet. How to use its strengths and avoid weaknesses to choose its own marketing strategy was a key factor in the development of SSC's brokerage business. The development of information technology provides service supported for low-cost customers.

As TOWN Matrix: **SO -growth strategy** : 1. Give full play to the influence of the background of state-owned assets and tap the needs of mid-to-high-end customers, and seize opportunities for market demand growth in the brokerage business. 2. Take advantage of customer service and other advantages to deepen the creation of high-quality brokerage products, and promote enterprises to become bigger and stronger. **WO-Twisting Strategy** : 1. Make full use of the company's good external social relations to change the company's disadvantages such as imperfect marketing system. 2. Take advantage of the opportunity of market growth, increase product and technology research and development, and eliminate product and technology disadvantages. **Threats** : 1. The commission ratio continued to decline, and it was difficult to support the expansion of



brokerage business revenue and profits. 2. The rapid rise of new Internet brokers and intensified industry competition. **ST-diversification strategy:** Consider taking advantage of the company's brand and service advantages to actively develop self-operated business and investment banking business, and increase the company's strength through other businesses. **WT-austerity strategy:** The Company's own disadvantages and threats would affect the company's development. Reduce the company's business scale and create new profit growth points. **SO-growth strategy.** The growth strategy was that companies should seize external opportunities and gave full play to their own advantages in order to obtain rapid growth in corporate revenue and profits. For SSC, the potential market demand for brokerage business was great, and the state also supports the development of Internet brokerage business. SSC could take advantage of its own state-owned enterprise background advantages and brand advantages in North China, increase resource input, rapidly expand its brokerage business marketing efforts in North China, and rapidly expand its scale. **WO-reversal strategy:** The reversal strategy referred to the use of external opportunities to promote the transformation of the company's internal disadvantages. For SSC, with the support of industrial policies and the market, it was necessary to introduce talents, carried out internal management system reform, product innovation, etc., to change the company's insufficient marketing capabilities and lack of product characteristics. So as to realize the stable development of brokerage business. **ST-Diversification strategy:** The diversification strategy referred to taking advantage of the enterprise and reducing the impact of external threats on the development of the enterprise. SSC itself was implementing a diversification strategy and has multiple business segments. Therefore, SSC had no need to implement a diversification strategy. **WT-austerity strategy:** The austerity strategy referred to avoiding external unfavorable factors, and focusing on improving the internal disadvantages of the company, and doing a good job of active defense. When the company's products lacked characteristics, and there were problems of lack of talents and insufficient marketing capabilities in internal management, the company could first improve the company's governance level, maintain the existing business scale, consolidate the foundation, and improve operating efficiency. In general, the brokerage business of SSC faced an excellent external environment. If measured able to be taken to enhance the competitiveness of products and reduced price competition in the brokerage

business, it would be able to greatly promote the growth of SSC's brokerage business. Therefore, in the first stage of enterprise development goals, the reversal strategy should be the main focus. The external environment could be used to gradually change the company's disadvantages such as lack of characteristics and weak marketing capabilities. After the product quality had been improved and recognized by customers in Shanxi Province, the growth strategy would be implemented to expand the scale of corporate brokerage business. In the analysis of the industry competition environment, it could be found that SSC had a big gap compared with the leading companies, and it was difficult to directly compete with the leading companies in terms of enterprise scale and technical level. Therefore, SSC should emphasize differentiation and obtain high competitiveness in market segments through special products. If SSC replicated its operating experience in Shanxi Province into its national brokerage business operations, it would promote the company's marketing capabilities and brand recognition in the short term, making the company's conditions for implementing differentiated competition more mature.

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