Independent Study Title	A CONSULTANCY PROJECT FOR THE GEMBA PROGRAM: DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE SOCIA MEDIA STRATEGY TO ATTRACT ETHNIC CHINES STUDENTS
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ABSTRACT

This Independent Study (IS) is structured as a consultancy project for the Thammasat University GEMBA Program, addressing the program's near "zero-base" invisibility in the lucrative ethnic Chinese student market encompassing Greater China and Southeast Asian Chinese communities. The program's current digital footprint is limited to an English-only website and Facebook page, with complete absence from critical decision-making platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu (Rednote), resulting in a systematic "Visibility Blackout."

The primary objective of this consultancy is to deliver a sustainable and affordable Chinese-language content marketing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), enabling GEMBA administrative staff to build brand awareness, cultivate word-of-mouth (WOM), and establish foundational market presence within severe resource constraints: an annual marketing budget of only 40,000 THB and approximately 5-6 hours per month available for marketing activities.

This study adopts an Applied Consultancy-Based Research Design incorporating Business Diagnostic Methodology, integrating three core analyses: (1) Literature review establishing an analytical framework encompassing academic models (McNicholas, 2024, demonstrating social media's indirect role in amplifying WOM

rather than direct recruitment), industry data (QS, 2025, identifying Southeast Asia as a high-growth frontier with "career ROI" as the top candidate priority), and platform practices (Xia, 2024, providing differentiated strategy guidance for WeChat, Weibo, and Rednote); (2) Internal analysis through interviews with the Program Director and administrative staff, supplemented by technical audits, identifying infrastructure barriers; (3) External analysis through in-depth interviews with 6 ethnic Chinese alumni representing three strategic customer segments—Type A "Newcomer," Type B "Settled Bridge," and Type C "Local-Born."

The findings reveal three strategic gaps: the "Visibility Gap" resulting in zero retrievable program information on Baidu and Rednote; the "Trust Gap" stemming from website "Not Secure" warnings and absence of ethnic Chinese alumni testimonials; and the "Content Gap" reflecting one-directional English content failing to address differentiated pain points across customer segments. Fishbone diagram analysis further identifies systematic interactions across five root cause categories: People, Process, Technology, Resources, and Environment.

Based on diagnostic conclusions, this study proposes a "Resource-Optimized & Asset-Light" dual-track strategy, substituting expensive external procurement (agency quotes approximately 700,000 THB/year) with an "Alumni Sponsorship" model, while prioritizing "Digital Facade Repair" as the primary tactical focus. Cost-benefit analysis demonstrates that the recommended "Self-Operated without Verification" option (Option C) requires only approximately 10,000 THB in Year 1, significantly below the existing 40,000 THB budget; successful recruitment of one ethnic Chinese student (tuition approximately 700,000 THB) yields a return on investment of 6,900%.

Final deliverables include: a strategic roadmap, platform operation guides (registration and operation SOPs for WeChat, Rednote, and Weibo), an annual marketing calendar (covering major holidays in China, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand for 2026), cost-benefit analysis, and a three-option comparison matrix, providing GEMBA with comprehensive executable guidance to build Chinese-language market visibility from zero following the "First Existence, Then Excellence" principle.

Keywords: Consultancy Project, Social Media Strategy, Higher Education Marketing, Student Recruitment, Ethnic Chinese Students, GEMBA, Standard Operating Procedure, WeChat, Weibo, Rednote, Business Diagnostic