

# Application of the Field Visit Method in the Pricing Strategy Course

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**Abstract:** Pricing strategy is a core course in marketing, characterized by a blend of theoretical abstraction and practical application. Traditional classroom lectures often risk becoming merely "theoretical exercises on paper," making it difficult for students to effectively link pricing methods—such as cost-oriented, demand-oriented, and competition-oriented approaches—with real-world market scenarios. The field visit method—a practical teaching approach emphasizing hands-on experience, on-site observation, and in-depth investigation—can effectively address this shortcoming. This paper explores the application of the field visit method in the pricing strategy course, analyzing the entire process from the design of teaching objectives, selection of visit targets, and organization of the process to knowledge internalization and effectiveness evaluation, illustrated by case studies from representative industries. Well-designed field visits can enhance students' understanding of the complexities involved in pricing decisions, improve their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to new contexts, and cultivate market sensitivity and critical thinking skills.

**Keywords:** Field visit method; Pricing strategy; Practical teaching; Course application.

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## 1. Introduction

The pricing strategy course typically covers topics such as pricing objectives, cost analysis, demand elasticity, competitive analysis, price discrimination, dynamic pricing, psychological pricing, and price coordination across channels and promotions. While textbooks often present these concepts through models, formulas, and case studies—enabling students to master calculations and derivations—students frequently struggle to truly grasp how enterprises balance profits, market share, brand image, and long-term customer relationships under real-world constraints. This challenge is particularly acute given the rapid development of the digital and platform economies, where dynamic, personalized, and algorithmic pricing have become increasingly prevalent; traditional classroom simulations can no longer fully capture this complexity. The field visit method is a teaching approach in which instructors purposefully organize students to visit enterprises, markets, distribution channels, or relevant institutions. Through on-site observation, interviews, data collection, and discussions, students gather first-hand information and subsequently validate theories and construct knowledge. As a form of experiential and situated learning, it emphasizes "learning by doing" and "learning in context." Integrating the field visit method into the pricing strategy course allows students to gain direct exposure to corporate cost structures, pricing processes, methods of gathering competitive intelligence, and the practical considerations behind pricing decisions, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. This paper aims to elucidate the logic and operational framework for applying the field visit method in pricing strategy courses. It first outlines the concept and theoretical foundations of the field visit method; next, it constructs an application model based on four dimensions: course objectives, content alignment, implementation processes, and evaluation mechanisms; then, it illustrates practical implementation through case studies from

representative industries (such as FMCG, retail, manufacturing, and internet platforms); and finally, it discusses implementation challenges and areas for improvement.

## 2. Concept and Theoretical Foundations of the Field Visit Method

Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) posits that effective learning is a cyclical process comprising "concrete experience," "reflective observation," "abstract conceptualization," and "active experimentation." The field visit method provides a gateway to "concrete experience," allowing students to observe pricing-related behaviors in real-world settings, engage in reflection and conceptualization through classroom discussions and assignments, and ultimately apply their learning to new pricing challenges. Situated cognition theory emphasizes that knowledge is context-dependent; pricing knowledge divorced from actual business contexts risks becoming "inert knowledge." By placing students within the actual decision-making environments of enterprises, field visits facilitate the contextualization and transfer of knowledge.

In the context of practical teaching research in Chinese higher education, the field visit method is often categorized under "social practice," "corporate orientation internships," or "on-site instruction." Existing literature largely focuses on applications in tourism management, hotel management, and engineering disciplines, with relatively few specialized studies addressing marketing—and specifically pricing strategy—courses. Some scholars have noted that while the common "case discussion plus calculation exercise" model in pricing education helps students master technical tools, it offers limited assistance in understanding deeper issues, such as the rationale behind specific pricing decisions or the dynamics of stakeholder interactions. Field visits allow

students to observe how cost accounting data translates into pricing floors, how sales teams report channel price conflicts, and how management balances short-term profits against long-term brand value—insights representing the kind of tacit knowledge that textbooks struggle to fully convey. Business schools abroad often incorporate field visits to hotels, airline revenue management departments, or retail headquarters into their pricing and revenue management courses, enabling students to gain direct exposure to the operation of dynamic pricing and revenue management systems. These practices demonstrate that on-site experiences significantly deepen students' understanding that "price is not an isolated variable but a strategic tool." Overall, while the use of field visits in pricing strategy courses is supported by both solid theoretical foundations and valuable practical precedents, it requires systematic design tailored to the course's specific characteristics rather than a superficial "whirlwind tour."

### **3. Goal Alignment and Content Matching for Field Visits in Pricing Strategy Courses**

#### **3.1. Redefining Teaching Objectives**

Traditional pricing strategy courses often focus on "mastering pricing methods and models" and "performing basic pricing calculations." With the introduction of field visits, objectives should expand to four levels: \*Cognitive objectives\* involve understanding the multidimensional constraints—such as costs, demand, competition, regulations, distribution channels, and branding—that shape actual corporate pricing decisions. \*Competency objectives\* entail developing basic skills in on-site information gathering, interviewing, and data analysis, as well as the ability to link observed phenomena with theoretical frameworks. \*Affective and attitudinal objectives\* focus on cultivating sensitivity toward pricing ethics, consumer perceptions of fairness, and long-term customer value. \*Transfer objectives\* involve the ability to apply insights gained from visits to other industries or simulated decision-making scenarios.

#### **3.2. Aligning Course Content with Visit Themes**

The pricing strategy curriculum can be divided into modules, each paired with a relevant focus for field visits. The cost-oriented pricing module is suitable for examining cost accounting and target-profit pricing processes in manufacturing firms. The demand and elasticity module suits visits focused on price experiments, membership pricing, and the evaluation of promotional effectiveness in retail or service sectors. The competition-oriented and game theory module is appropriate for observing price monitoring and response mechanisms in highly competitive industries (e.g., FMCG, e-commerce). The price discrimination and dynamic pricing module allows for the study of algorithmic pricing and revenue management practices in airlines, hotels, ride-hailing services, or e-commerce platforms. The channel and pricing structure module is ideal for examining price management and the control of unauthorized cross-territory sales (gray market activity) between brands and distributors. Finally, the psychological pricing and value communication module suits the study of price presentation and value storytelling in high-end brands or "new retail" environments. Instructors can schedule these visits—based on the semester's progress—

after the relevant theoretical modules are taught but before comprehensive case studies begin, ensuring the visits serve as a means to validate and deepen theoretical understanding rather than acting as isolated activities.

### **4. Design of Implementation Process and Scenario Application for the Site Visit Method**

#### **4.1. Pre-visit Preparation Phase**

Define the visit objectives and a list of core questions. Teachers must communicate with the company in advance to determine the scope of student observation and interviews. They should design a list of structured questions—such as "How does your company determine the initial price range for new products?", "How are cost fluctuations passed on to the final price?", and "How do you monitor and respond to competitors' pricing moves?"—ensuring these questions are specific, answerable, and directly relevant to course theories. Select the host company. Prioritize companies with relatively transparent pricing decisions, a willingness to engage openly, and strong industry representativeness. Startups or SMEs often have shorter decision-making chains, making it easier for students to interact with key personnel, whereas large enterprises can demonstrate institutionalized pricing processes and system support. Consider visiting companies across the supply chain (upstream and downstream) to understand how prices are transmitted along the value chain. Student grouping and task allocation. Divide students into groups of 5–8, with each group responsible for a specific observation dimension (e.g., costs, demand, competition, channels, internal processes). Assign roles such as note-taker, questioner, and summarizer to ensure an orderly process and full participation. Knowledge preparation and ethics training. Organize thematic discussions prior to the visit to review relevant theoretical tools and emphasize the protection of trade secrets, proper questioning etiquette, and data usage guidelines.

#### **4.2. On-site Implementation Phase**

On-site activities typically include: a company overview; tours of pricing-related departments (finance, marketing, sales, data analytics, etc.); interviews with key personnel; on-site observation (store price tags, promotional materials, system interfaces, etc.); and immediate group discussions. Teachers should act as facilitators rather than directors, asking follow-up questions at appropriate times to deepen the discussion while managing time and pacing to avoid getting bogged down in purely promotional presentations.

A key success factor is a "question-driven" approach. Students enter the site with pre-designed questions rather than passively receiving one-way lectures. Immediately following the interviews, conduct a quick 10–15 minute group debrief to record key findings and questions, preparing for subsequent in-depth analysis.

#### **4.3. Post-visit Internalization and Output Phase**

The transformation of the experience following the visit is critical to the overall success of the method. It is recommended to incorporate the following components: Require students to complete individual journals within 24 hours, documenting their most unexpected discoveries, discrepancies with theoretical concepts from the course, and

personal areas of confusion. Submit a group analysis report that applies the course's theoretical framework to conduct a structured analysis of the visited company's pricing strategy, identifying strengths, potential risks, and suggestions for improvement. Reports must be supported by data or facts rather than relying solely on subjective impressions. Participate in classroom presentations and debates; following group presentations, the instructor should facilitate cross-group comparative discussions to guide students in identifying commonalities and differences in pricing logic across various industries or companies. Assign tasks directly related to the site visit, such as "re-evaluating the price of a specific product from the visited company using value-based pricing" or "analyzing whether the price discrimination observed during the visit aligns with economic efficiency and ethical standards." Through this closed-loop process, the site visit transforms from a one-off event into a comprehensive learning cycle.

#### **4.4. Typical Application Scenarios and Case Studies**

##### **4.4.1. Site Visits to Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) Companies**

Consider a regional dairy company as an example. During the visit, students can observe how fluctuations in raw milk prices affect the frequency of ex-factory price adjustments; how distributor rebates and recommended retail prices are structured to prevent unauthorized cross-regional sales (channel conflict); and how the company responds to competitor promotions—either by matching prices or adopting differentiation strategies. By interviewing sales directors and finance personnel, students gain a tangible understanding that "cost-plus pricing" is not merely a simple formula but a dynamic balancing act that must account for channel profit margins, advertising costs, and promotional budgets. Post-visit analysis reports often reveal that students had previously underestimated the complexity of channel price management.

##### **4.4.2. Site Visits to Chain Retail or "New Retail" Enterprises**

During visits to the headquarters and outlets of supermarkets or convenience stores, students can focus on observing: the contexts in which "odd-ending" pricing (e.g., ending in .99) versus round-number pricing is used; the design of price differentials between member and non-member pricing; dynamic markdown mechanisms for products nearing their expiration dates; and the impact of shelf placement and price tags on perceived value. By incorporating eye-tracking data or simple consumer interviews (conditions permitting), students can gain a deeper understanding of how "price presentation" is itself an integral part of the pricing strategy.

##### **4.4.3. Site Visits to Manufacturing Enterprises**

Companies producing high-end equipment or industrial goods often employ value-based pricing or solution-based pricing strategies. By observing production processes, cost accounting systems, and sales negotiation scenarios, students can see how enterprises shift from a "cost-plus-profit" model to justifying prices based on "value created for the customer." Such visits are particularly effective in breaking the students' ingrained mindset that "pricing is simply calculating costs."

#### **4.4.4. Visits to Internet Platforms or Sharing Economy Enterprises**

When conditions permit, organize student visits to examine the pricing mechanisms of ride-hailing, food delivery, or e-commerce platforms (utilizing a combination of public data, internal lectures, and limited system demonstrations). Students can discuss the fairness of peak-time surcharges, the boundaries of personalized pricing, and the impact of regulation on algorithmic pricing. These visits extend course content to current hot topics, enhancing the real-world relevance of the learning experience. Instructors can make flexible choices based on local industrial resources; the key lies in deeply aligning the visit content with course theories.

### **5. Implementation Challenges and Effectiveness Evaluation**

#### **5.1. Implementation Challenges**

##### **5.1.1. Limitations on Corporate Resources and Openness**

Not all enterprises are willing to fully disclose pricing details. Solutions include establishing long-term industry-academia partnerships, selecting industries with relatively standardized pricing processes, and adopting a hybrid approach—combining public information, limited interviews, and in-store observations—to reduce the burden on the enterprise.

##### **5.1.2. Organizational Costs and Safety Concerns**

Off-site visits involve transportation, insurance, and scheduling coordination. Solutions include prioritizing local or nearby enterprises, integrating visits with course internships or holiday practical activities, and clearly establishing safety protocols and disciplinary requirements.

##### **5.1.3. Uneven Depth of Student Participation**

Some students may engage only in superficial observation. Solutions include emphasizing task-driven learning and process-based assessment, requiring individual observation notes, and asking random questions during presentations to verify genuine participation.

##### **5.1.4. Risk of Disconnect Between Theory and Practice**

Without sufficient internalization, visits can easily devolve into mere "sightseeing tours." Solutions include rigorously designing the theoretical preparation and the translation of findings into learning outcomes (both before and after the visit), and having instructors continuously guide discussions by asking, "How does this relate to—or differ from—the [specific] theory we have studied?"

**5.1.5 Challenges in Quantifying Subjective Practical Outcomes**  
Quantifying such evaluations presents difficulties; the solution lies in establishing clear scoring criteria that cover dimensions such as factual accuracy, theoretical application, critical thinking, and quality of expression, while providing thorough and explicit explanations for the scoring details of each dimension.

#### **5.2. Effectiveness Evaluation**

Evaluation should not focus solely on the completion status of the field visit report but should instead consider both the process and the outcomes. Process evaluation encompasses on-site engagement, the quality of questions asked, and teamwork; outcome evaluation assesses the analytical depth, factual substantiation, and critical nature of the report; and transfer evaluation examines whether insights gained from the visit are reflected in subsequent coursework or final

projects.

A combination of methods can be employed, including pre- and post-visit comparisons (assessing the depth of analysis regarding the same pricing case before and after the visit), student self-reports, and instructor observations.

## 6. Conclusion and Outlook

The field visit method infuses the pricing strategy course with authentic business contexts and vivid decision-making logic, helping students transition from merely "knowing pricing methods" to "understanding pricing decisions." Successful implementation relies on clearly defined objectives, carefully aligned content, a structured process design, and a rigorous closed-loop system for internalization and evaluation. Instructors must shift from being mere transmitters of knowledge to designers and facilitators of learning experiences, while actively expanding resources for school-enterprise collaboration. In the future, advancements in virtual reality, enterprise digital twins, and online interview technologies will enable the integration of in-person visits with in-depth online interviews and data dashboard analysis. This hybrid visitation model will reduce organizational costs and expand the scope of participation. Furthermore, the pricing strategy course could explore organically integrating

field visits with other practical formats—such as business simulations and consulting-style projects—to build a more comprehensive system for developing practical skills.

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