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Research on the Marketing Strategies of 7-Eleven in Japan

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Abstract. As a leading company in the global convenience store industry,7-Eleven succeeds because of its distinctive marketing strategy. Since its development in 1927,the brand has opened over 70,000 stores worldwide, meeting the needs of urban and suburban consumers for quick and convenient purchases of daily necessities. The stores offer a wide variety of products, including snacks and beverages, ready-to-eat meals, and daily necessities, and their strategic locations make them the first choice for people in a hurry. In this highly-competitive market, 7-Eleven has built a competitive edge via high-density site selection, diversified convenience-oriented services, a strict franchise system, meticulous product management, and eco-friendly packaging. Nevertheless, it also faces operational challenges including product homogenization and underutilization of in-store space. This article will deeply analyse 7-Eleven's marketing strategies ,summarize its successful experience ,and propose targeted optimizing solutions from two dimensions :product differentiation and optimization of the store space ,providing insights for the development of the convenience store industry .

Keywords: 7-Eleven, convenience store , marketing strategy , business marketing, business management

1. Introduction

As a leading company in the global convenience store industry,7-Eleven succeeds because of its distinctive marketing strategy. Since its development in 1927,the brand has opened over 70,000 stores worldwide, meeting the needs of urban and suburban consumers for quick and convenient purchases of daily necessities. The stores offer a wide variety of products, including snacks and beverages, ready-to-eat meals, and daily necessities, and their strategic locations make them the first choice for people in a hurry. In recent years, competition in the convenience store industry has become increasingly fierce, and 7-Eleven has managed to secure a place in the market through its unique convenience, careful franchise strategy, clever product management, and sustainable packaging. This article will delve into the marketing strategies of 7-Eleven, analyze its successful experiences and practices and propose optimization solutions.

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2. Development overview of 7-Eleven

2.1. Brand overview

In Japan ,7-Eleven is part of the Seven-Eleven Holdings Group. In 1973, Ito Yokado.

Acquired the franchise rights for the American 7-Eleven and opened the first Japanese 7-Eleven in the following year. In 1975, the company established a 24-hour, year-round operation model. Later, it acquired its American parent company, gaining global dominance over the brand. Japanese 7-Eleven primarily expands through franchising, adopting a strategy of high-density, concentrated store openings. It relies on POS sales data for item management and has built a multi-temperature layer distribution system to ensure frequent replenishment and product freshness of fresh foods such as rice balls and bento boxes. In addition to retail sales, stores have various public services such as ATM banking, utility payments, courier delivery, printing and copying, and ticket purchases. They have evolved from retail shops into important community infrastructure in Japan and are the largest leading company in the convenience store industry. Their business model has also become an important reference for the global convenience store industry.

2.2. Development history

7-Eleven convenience store was born in Dallas, Texas, USA, originally as the "Southland Ice Company" established in 1927.

In 1973,the American 7-11 model was introduced to Japan.Ito Yokado signed a regional franchise agreement with the American Southern Company and set up a subsidiary ,York Seven,to obtain the rights to operate 7-Eleven in Japan. In May 1974,Japan's first 7-Eleven store opened in Toyosu, Edogawa Ward,Tokyo. At first,it kept the same hours as stores in the United States,operating from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. In 1975,the Tobamaru store in Fukushima Prefecture became the first to switch to a 24-hour,year-round operation model. This approach was later adopted by stores across Japan and changed how the convenience store industry operated.

2.3. Brand target market and market share

7-Eleven targets several customer groups. Its main customers are young people aged 18–34 and middle-aged individuals aged 35–54. Many in these groups live busy lives,including students,young professionals,and parents who need to buy food or groceries quickly after work. Elderly people who have difficulty traveling long distances to large supermarkets also buy basic necessities from convenience stores. Overall,7-Eleven focuses on consumers who want easy access to daily necessities,snacks,and simple meals [1].

As the dominant player in Japan's convenience-store sector, 7-Eleven operated 21 927 domestic outlets by late February 2026, with substantial growth in store count and sales since its 1974 launch. It holds roughly 34-35 % sales-based market share and about 39 % share by store number, outperforming rivals FamilyMart and Lawson. In the Japanese convenience store industry, 7-Eleven holds a leading position due to its scale advantages. In terms of sales volume, its market share in Japan is approximately 34–35%, while in terms of the number of stores, its market share is about 39%, which is higher than that of its competitors such as FamilyMart and Lawson.

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3. 7-Eleven's marketing strategies

3.1. 7-Eleven's convenience

3.1.1. The location of 7-Eleven

If you want to motivate customers to come into the store for consumption, it's a good choice to open a store in a busy area of the city. Most 7-Eleven convenience stores are located in the city center, around commercial streets and office buildings. The surrounding people include residents, office workers and tourists, and these groups belong to the impulsive consumption group. A good geographical location also meets their needs for convenience.

This success also depends on 7-Eleven's intensive location strategy, that is, it does not adopt a scattered approach but opens as many stores as possible in a specific area in one place to cover the market [2].

3.1.2. 7-Eleven's portable service

In the 1980s,7-Eleven began to implement a differentiation strategy and try to offer a variety of services. In the early 1980s,7-Eleven started to provide services such as electricity bill payment on behalf of others, express delivery collection on behalf of others, and accepting commissions for New Year greeting cards. It also began to expand into common service areas in daily life, such as laundry services, insurance services, and rental services. Subsequently, convenience stores in Japan also began to follow and promote diversified services. Nowadays in Japan, convenience stores can basically meet various needs in daily life, such as public payment (including administrative, medical and educational services), purchasing receipts, checking documents and printing materials, etc. [3].

7-Eleven offers 3k+ items, low-fee local delivery, and AI-optimized logistics [4].

The vast majority of customers choose 7-Eleven because they seek convenience. 83% of consumers said that the degree to which they value convenience when shopping is far greater than it was five years ago. Although consumers say that price and quality are the top considerations when purchasing, 52% of the respondents said that half or more of their consumption behavior is influenced by convenience. Nowadays, consumers do not have sufficient time to purchase groceries. In the context of tight schedules, convenience has become a core competitiveness [1].

3.2. 7-Eleven's franchise strategy

Because convenience stores are small in scale but numerous,store managers cannot personally supervise every outlet. For this reason,7-Eleven uses a franchise system. Under this system,the headquarters charges franchisees fees for using the brand and patent rights,while also providing training,advertising,and other support services. Franchisees then use the headquarters' brand to run their retail stores.

7-Eleven applies strict standards when selecting franchisees. In Taiwan,it offers two franchise arrangements. One is franchising,in which franchisees must own the store premises and pay renovation costs themselves. The other is consignment franchising,where 7-Eleven assigns an existing store to the franchisee for operation.

According to the franchise manual,applicants must first download the application form from 7-Eleven's official website, fill in the required information,and return it to 7-Eleven. In franchising cases,7-Eleven also sends professional staff to assess the location of the applicant's store. Screening

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follows after that. If an applicant passes the initial review,staff from 7-Eleven's headquarters conduct a "home visit." This step mainly examines the applicant's family background and income situation.

The process is fairly detailed.

Applicants must also attend an interview with 7-Eleven's management. At this stage,applicants can still reconsider whether they want to continue with the process,while managers who may later supervise the store can better understand their circumstances.

After completing these selection stages, qualified applicants may sign a franchise agreement with 7-Eleven receive training,and then move on to opening the store [5].

This franchise system helps blueuce costs for headquarters and saves both labor and time: compablue with direct stores,the cost of chain franchising is much lower,and most ofthe preparation work for opening a store is handled bythe owner.This makes it possible to open multiple stores within a short period,and popularity can grow quickly as a result.A strict review mechanism also allows headquartersto control sales channels and confirm suitable goods locations more effectively.For franchise stores,the headquarters provides business guidance.Even ifa store owner has no prior experience, they can still attempt store operation with a higher chance of success than if they were operating independently.There are clear advantages here.

In addition, franchise stores are guided and managed by dedicated staff from headquarters, which can improve the professionalism of store operations.Some promotional activities and advertisements are also arranged by headquarters, so the franchise does not need to bear those promotional expenses.Since opening,the franchise store benefits from high popularity and customer trust because of the 7-Eleven name.It can also purchase goods at relatively low prices through the company's purchasing power [6].

3.3. 7-Eleven's product management

3.3.1. Promotion signs and product display

In order to encourage customers to purchase the products they need, 7-Eleven stores set up prominent promotional signs and offer discounts such as "buy one, get one free". Promotional pricing means lowering prices to increase sales, and it is widely used as a business strategy. In theory,higher sales volume from lower prices can make up for the lower revenue earned on each product. Many consumers worry about missing these discounts,so promotional prices can push them toward impulsive purchases [7].

7-Eleven also uses product display in a deliberate way. Items that are close to their expiration date are often moved to more visible locations,where customers can see and reach them more easily. Sometimes these products are sold at discounted prices so they can be used before they expire. At the checkout counter,customers often notice items such as napkins and chewing gum,which are common household goods and easy-to-carry snacks. This placement encourages impulsive buying.

The store interior also plays a role in shaping customer behavior. Eye-catching colors and distinctive brand logos make products easier to recognize. The lighting and color scheme create a clean and warm shopping environment [1].

3.3.2. NDF's value creation

To give the company a competitive advantage,it has to create more value than its competitors. In 7-Eleven convenience stores in Japan,the organization that takes on this role is the Japan Food Cooperative Association (NDF),a non-profit organization made up of 86 manufacturers that supply

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fast food to 7-Eleven convenience stores. NDF has developed many distinctive products and popular items for 7-Eleven convenience stores,which has helped the company create more value in the market.

NDF supports 7-Eleven mainly through quality control and cost efficiency. At the same cost level,NDF can produce higher-quality products than other firms,and it can also make products of similar quality at a lower cost. This matters. In producing items such as onigiri,rice balls with blue beans,and fried rice,NDF focuses closely on product standards and keeps adjusting its products based on consumer demand. When quality improves and production becomes more efficient,economic returns also tend to increase.

On the cost side,NDF uses joint purchasing of raw materials to maintain high-quality management. With this method,each store uses the same ingblueients in processing,which helps keep product quality consistent and makes management easier. At the same time,when dozens of companies purchase raw materials together,they are in a stronger position to negotiate with suppliers and secure stable prices. The main benefit of joint procurement is simple: as transaction volume rises, raw material purchasing costs fall significantly. Through this system of joint procurement,7-Eleven has been able to reduce costs substantially [6].

3.4. 7-Eleven's green packaging

Green packaging refers to packaging that uses less material, avoids excessive wrapping,and adopts degradable,environmentally friendly materials. The spread of green product packaging has blueuced both the amount and frequency of packaging use,cut resource waste,and helped protect the environment. As product packaging has continued to improve,many convenience store companies have started using green packaging. One example is 7-Eleven,which continues to promote green and recyclable canvas bags as a replacement for traditional woven bags. Each canvas bag is used 100 times than the previous woven bags.

4. 7-Eleven improvement suggestions

4.1. Differentiated operation of goods

7-Eleven mainly focuses on food sales, offering both the common snacks and beverages found in supermarkets and ready-to-eat foods exclusive to its stores. However, apart from the differences in logos and individual food items, the homogenization phenomenon in convenience stores is quite obvious. For the same cup of milk, there are almost five or six brands displayed in the freezer, including 7-Eleven's self-developed brands. The results are often not optimistic. Sometimes, customers choose the brands that carry more weight in their hearts, while the remaining brands are naturally abandoned in the freezer. Over time, the brands that sell well may need to keep restocking or even be out of stock. If the self-developed brand development is unsuccessful, they also have to resort to promotional measures to avoid losses. Homogenized operation leads to the repetitive construction of convenience stores and intensifies competition among peers, which is not conducive to the long-term development of the entire business.

Therefore, the key to the operation of convenience stores does not lie in price competition among peers, but rather in focusing on differentiated operation. For the relatively saturated fields of deep-processed products such as snacks, ready-to-eat foods, and beverages, it is feasible to reduce the introduction of brands. On the basis of meeting the basic needs of surrounding users, it is more important to carry out product innovation When the general pattern is achieved, it is necessary to

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promptly eliminate slow-moving goods and give new products more opportunities, especially those with distinctive features. For instance, new products that are not available in nearby supermarkets and have no comparison can often catch people's eyes. Local characteristic products are also a manifestation of differentiation. For consumers, they are willing to pay for this uniqueness At the same time, compared with 7-Eleven convenience stores in office buildings, the demand for products in residential areas may be fresh fruits, vegetables, and even more cost-effective yogurt and milk rather than ready-to-eat fast food bento boxes. Therefore, optimization can be made in these details with surrounding supermarkets. Naturally, the profit margin of such products will be relatively higher, and it will also generate a certain degree of customer stickiness.To succeed in innovation,weekly summaries and daily sales analysis are needed.

4.2. Optimize space utilization

The small size of 7-Eleven stores can lead to a weaker shopping experience. Store size shapes what customers expect before they even enter. Many consumers assume that compact convenience stores cannot offer a comfortable shopping environment,and some may worry about limited stock or lower product quality. From the customer's point of view,7-Eleven stores often feel too small and crowded. One store cannot handle a large number of customers at the same time,so once customer traffic reaches a certain level,the interior quickly becomes congested.

This is most obvious during peak hours. Customers may find it hard to move through the aisles,which makes shopping less convenient. Limited space near the checkout area adds to this problem by creating congestion and longer waiting times. As a result,some potential customers may choose not to buy anything at all.

7-Eleven can improve this situation by replanning store layouts so the available space is used more effectively and aisles remain clear. Products should also be arranged in ways that make them easier to find. Shelf placement can be adjusted based on sales data so that frequently purchased items are easier for customers to reach quickly. Regular review of sales data also helps staff adjust inventory levels to match market demand more closely.

That would help.

Giving more space to high-demand items could blueuce clutter and use limited floor space better. Clear and attractive signage and displays may also help customers move through the store more easily. At the same time,overstocking shelves should be avoided because it can make an already small store feel even more crowded inside. 7-Eleven could also introduce self-service terminals and checkout systems to improve convenience for customers while blueucing pressure on in-store operations [1]. Self-service checkout systems allow customers to order online and pick up their orders in person,which may ease congestion in the store while making purchases more convenient [1].

5. Conclusion

This article focuses 7-Eleven in Japan, sorts out the brand's development history and market status quo, and analyzes its marketing strategy from four aspects: convenience, franchise strategy, product management, and product packaging. 7-Eleven relies on high-density site selection and layout, diversified convenient services, and a strict franchise system with refined product operation and green packaging, and has become the leading enterprise in Japan's convenience store industry. However, during its operation, it has also exposed problems such as product homogeneity and insufficient store space utilization. In response to these deficiencies, this article proposes two

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improvement suggestions: promoting differentiated product operation and optimizing store space utilization Overall,7-Eleven's entire business model has many merits, but there are also areas that need improvement. It has reference value for the business practice of the convenience store industry.

Due to the limitations of data acquisition conditions, this paper lacks empirical research and first-hand data within enterprises, and there are certain limitations in the analysis of the actual implementation effects of some strategies. Future research can be further in-depth by combining more literature.

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