

A Case Study of ASICS's Marketing Strategy based on 4P Theory

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Abstract. ASICS is a globally recognized sportswear brand renowned for its commitment to innovation and performance. This study examines ASICS' marketing strategy by analyzing its market positioning, promotional approaches, and competitive strategies. Utilizing a comprehensive research methodology, including case study analysis and strategic evaluation, the study explores ASICS' branding techniques, sponsorship initiatives, and digital marketing efforts. The findings indicate that ASICS' strong focus on technological advancements and athlete endorsements has significantly contributed to its global success. In addition, ASICS has gained significant attention and built strong customer loyalty through its long-term sponsorship of marathon events. However, challenges such as limited influence in the athleisure market and intense competition from industry giants remain obstacles to further expansion. The study concludes that ASICS must enhance its digital marketing, expand into the lifestyle footwear segment, and capitalize on emerging markets to maintain its competitive edge. These insights provide valuable recommendations for ASICS and other sportswear brands aiming to refine their marketing strategies in a dynamic industry landscape.

Keywords: ASICS, Marketing Strategy, Brand Positioning, Promotional Strategy, Competitive.

1. Introduction

ASICS, a renowned Japanese sportswear company, has established itself as a leading brand in the athletic footwear and apparel industry. The company's name, ASICS, is an acronym derived from the Latin phrase "Anima Sana in Corpore Sano," which translates to "a sound mind in a sound body" [1]. This philosophy underscores the brand's commitment to promoting holistic health and well-being through sports and fitness. ASICS founded in 1949 by Kihachiro Onitsuka in Kobe, Japan, the company initially operated under the name Onitsuka limited company. Onitsuka began by manufacturing basketball shoes, aiming to inspire post-war youth in Japan to engage in sports as a means to foster both physical and mental health. Over the years, the company expanded its product line to include footwear for various sports, gaining international recognition. A notable milestone was the introduction of the Mexico 66 design, which featured the distinctive crossed stripes—now synonymous with the brand as the "Tiger Stripes." This design gained further prominence when martial artist Bruce Lee wore them, enhancing the brand's global appeal. In 1977, Onitsuka Tiger merged with GTO and Jelenk to form ASICS Corporation, marking a new chapter in the company's history. ASICS' mission is deeply rooted in its name's origin, emphasizing the promotion of a healthy lifestyle through sports. The company strives to create products that not only enhance athletic performance but also contribute to the overall well-being of individuals. This mission reflects a holistic approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of physical activity and mental health. In this paper, it using the literature analysis method to find out the barriers experienced by ASICS and how to improve them. The paper will analyze from the four dimensions of product, price, promotion and place in the marketing mix.

2. ASICS Brand Introduction

2.1. Product Characteristics

ASICS offers a diverse range of products, including performance running shoes, apparel, and accessories. The brand is particularly renowned for its high-quality running shoes, which combine

advanced technology with comfort. Products like the GEL-Kayano and GEL-Nimbus series have become staples among runners worldwide, known for their cushioning and support [2]. The company's commitment to innovation is evident in its continuous research and development efforts, aiming to enhance athletic performance while minimizing the risk of injury.

2.2. Target Customer

ASICS primarily caters to athletes and fitness enthusiasts who seek performance-oriented products. The brand's emphasis on quality and functionality appeals to both professional athletes and recreational runners. Additionally, with the resurgence of retro styles, ASICS' heritage line, Onitsuka Tiger, has attracted fashion-conscious consumers, blending athletic functionality with street-wear aesthetics.

2.3. Basic Marketing Strategy

ASICS employs a multifaceted marketing approach to maintain its position in the competitive sportswear market. The brand sponsors various sports events and athletes, enhancing its visibility and credibility. These sponsorships align the brand with athletic excellence and community engagement. Moreover, ASICS leverages digital platforms to connect with consumers, offering fitness apps like Run-keeper to integrate technology with fitness, thereby enhancing customer experience and loyalty. ASICS has established a robust global presence, with operations spanning North America, Europe, Asia, and other regions. In the fiscal year 2023, the company reported net income of ¥35.2 billion. Sales of core performance sports footwear (excluding running shoes) rose by 33.2% to reach 72.2 billion yen [3, 4]. This financial performance underscores the brand's strong market position and consumer trust worldwide.

3. Marketing Strategy Analysis

3.1. Product

ASICS's product strategy is centered on delivering high-performance sports gear through continuous innovation. The brand's emphasis on technology, such as the GEL cushioning system for shock absorption and FlyteFoam for lightweight durability, ensures that athletes receive top-tier support tailored to their needs. Additionally, ASICS integrates biomechanical research into its designs, reducing injury risks and enhancing natural movement, making it a preferred choice for serious athletes. By leveraging data-driven insights and continuous testing, ASICS refines its footwear designs to optimize energy return, stability, and endurance, offering solutions that cater to the specific biomechanics of different sports. This focus on functionality has strengthened ASICS's reputation among runners and professionals seeking reliability and comfort. The company consistently collaborates with sports scientists and elite athletes to refine its products, ensuring they meet the highest standards of performance. Furthermore, ASICS invests in sustainable material innovations, reducing its environmental footprint while maintaining product durability and comfort [4, 5]. However, its limited presence in the lifestyle and athleisure market presents a challenge. While competitors blend performance with fashion, ASICS maintains a conservative approach, prioritizing sports technology over style. This has led to a more niche audience, primarily composed of dedicated athletes rather than casual consumers. Despite this, ASICS remains competitive within its niche market. Its commitment to research-backed performance innovations secures a loyal customer base. To expand its appeal, the brand could explore integrating its technology into more versatile, fashion-forward designs. By doing so, ASICS would not only attract sports professionals but also tap into the growing demand for multifunctional footwear that seamlessly transitions from athletic activities to everyday life. This would allow ASICS to reach a broader audience while maintaining its stronghold in high-performance sportswear, ensuring long-term growth and relevance in the evolving sports industry.

3.2. Price

ASICS employs a pricing strategy that reflects its brand positioning as a provider of high-quality, performance-oriented products. The company utilizes a product line pricing approach, offering various models within each product category to cater to different consumer segments. For instance, in their running shoe lineup, ASICS offers entry-level models that provide essential features at a more accessible price point, targeting casual runners or beginners. Conversely, their premium models, equipped with advanced technologies and materials, are priced higher, appealing to serious athletes and professionals who prioritize performance enhancements. This tiered pricing structure allows ASICS to address the diverse needs and budgets of its customer base without diluting its brand equity. However, the premium pricing of their top-tier products positions ASICS in direct competition with other high-end brands, necessitating continuous innovation and value addition to justify the price points. While this strategy reinforces the brand's commitment to quality, it may also alienate price-sensitive consumers who might opt for more affordable alternatives offering similar features. Striking a balance between maintaining premium pricing and expanding market reach remains a critical consideration for ASICS in its pricing strategy.

3.3. Promotion

ASICS's promotional strategy is multifaceted, aiming to reinforce its brand identity and **engage** with its target audience effectively. The company invests in advertising campaigns that highlight the performance and technological superiority of its products, often featuring professional athletes to endorse the brand's credibility. Sponsorships play a pivotal role in ASICS's promotional mix, with the brand associating itself with major sporting events and teams, thereby enhancing visibility and reinforcing its commitment to sports excellence. For example, ASICS has been a prominent sponsor of marathons worldwide, aligning the brand with endurance and athleticism. Additionally, ASICS leverages digital marketing channels, including social media platforms and influencer partnerships, to reach a broader and younger audience. These efforts are complemented by community engagement initiatives, such as organizing local running clubs and fitness events, fostering a sense of community among users and enhancing brand loyalty. However, compared to competitors like Nike and Adidas, ASICS's promotional activities may lack the same level of global visibility and cultural impact [6, 7, 8, 9, and 10]. The brand's conservative approach in its promotional campaigns might limit its appeal to the younger demographic seeking trendy and lifestyle-oriented messaging. Enhancing creativity and cultural relevance in promotions could bolster ASICS's brand image and market share.

3.4. Place

ASICS's distribution strategy, encompassing both physical and digital channels, ensures that consumers can access their products through various touchpoints, enhancing convenience and brand presence. The company's own retail stores serve as brand ambassadors, offering consumers an immersive experience that reflects ASICS's commitment to quality and performance. These stores allow customers to engage with the brand firsthand, receive personalized fitting services, and explore the latest product innovations. Authorized retailers and sporting goods stores expand ASICS's reach, making products available to a broader audience and leveraging the retailers' established customer bases. The brand's e-commerce platform caters to the growing preference for online shopping, providing detailed product information, customer reviews, and seamless purchasing options. Collaborations with online marketplaces further extend ASICS's digital footprint, ensuring availability across multiple platforms. However, the brand's physical store presence is less prominent in certain regions, potentially limiting accessibility for consumers who prefer in-person shopping experiences. Additionally, the reliance on third-party retailers means that ASICS has less control over the brand presentation and customer service quality in those outlets. Expanding flagship stores in key markets and enhancing partnerships with retailers could strengthen ASICS's distribution strategy, ensuring consistent brand representation and improved customer engagement.

4. Suggestion

4.1. Expanding Product Line

ASICS has established a strong reputation for producing high-quality, performance-oriented athletic footwear and apparel. However, to enhance its market position further, the company should consider expanding its product line to include more lifestyle and athleisure options. This segment has seen significant growth as consumers increasingly seek versatile footwear that combines both style and functionality. By integrating fashionable designs with their existing performance technologies, ASICS can appeal to a broader audience beyond just athletes. For instance, competitors like Nike and Adidas have successfully launched lifestyle sneakers that resonate with both athletic and casual wearers. ASICS could develop a similar line that maintains its commitment to comfort and performance while embracing contemporary fashion trends. Additionally, collaborating with fashion designers or influencers could inject fresh perspectives into their product designs, making them more appealing to younger demographics. This strategy not only diversifies the product portfolio but also strengthens brand relevance in a rapidly evolving market.

4.2. More Price Competitive

ASICS's current pricing strategy reflects its commitment to quality, with products positioned at various price points to cater to different consumer segments. However, to capture a larger market share, the company should consider introducing more competitively priced options without compromising on essential features. This approach can attract price-sensitive consumers who might otherwise opt for more affordable alternatives. For example, offering entry-level models with simplified designs but retaining key performance elements can serve as an introduction to the brand for new customers. Implementing periodic promotional pricing or bundling products can also incentivize purchases and enhance perceived value. Furthermore, exploring flexible payment options, such as installment plans, can make higher-priced items more accessible to a broader audience. By adopting these pricing strategies, ASICS can balance its premium brand image with the need to remain competitive in a diverse market landscape.

4.3. Digital Marketing Platforms

ASICS's promotional efforts have traditionally focused on highlighting product performance and technological advancements. While this approach reinforces the brand's credibility among athletes, there is an opportunity to broaden promotional strategies to engage a wider audience. Embracing digital marketing platforms more aggressively can enhance brand visibility and appeal to younger consumers. For instance, creating engaging content on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok can showcase products in everyday settings, resonating with lifestyle-oriented consumers. Collaborations with popular influencers or celebrities can also amplify brand reach and introduce ASICS to new demographics. Additionally, implementing interactive campaigns, such as virtual fitness challenges or user-generated content contests, can foster community engagement and strengthen brand loyalty. By diversifying promotional tactics, ASICS can enhance its cultural relevance and connect with consumers beyond the traditional athletic community.

4.4. Online Shopping

ASICS's distribution strategy encompasses both physical retail stores and online platforms, ensuring product availability across multiple channels. However, to optimize this approach, the company should consider enhancing its e-commerce capabilities to meet the growing demand for online shopping. Investing in a user-friendly website with personalized recommendations, virtual try-on features, and seamless checkout processes can significantly improve the online customer experience. Additionally, expanding partnerships with reputable online retailers can increase product accessibility and reach. On the physical retail front, ASICS could benefit from opening pop-up stores or experiential retail spaces in strategic locations to create immersive brand experiences. These

temporary setups can generate buzz and attract new customers without the long-term commitment of permanent stores. Furthermore, integrating omnichannel strategies, such as buy-online-pick-up-in-store (BOPIS), can provide consumers with flexible shopping options, blending the convenience of online shopping with the immediacy of physical retail. By refining its distribution approach, ASICS can better cater to evolving consumer preferences and enhance overall accessibility.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, ASICS has built a strong foundation as a performance-focused brand by applying the 4Ps of marketing—Product, Price, Promotion, and Place—strategically in its global operations. The brand's commitment to product innovation, especially through its GEL technology and advanced running shoes, has positioned it as a trusted choice among serious athletes. However, its current focus mainly targets performance rather than lifestyle, which may limit its appeal in the fast-growing athleisure market.

In terms of pricing, ASICS uses a product line pricing approach that helps reach different consumer groups, from beginners to professional athletes. Yet, there is room to introduce more budget-friendly models and flexible pricing strategies to compete with brands offering similar quality at lower prices. Offering promotional bundles or installment options could also increase accessibility without weakening its premium image.

Promotion is another key area where ASICS could grow further. While it maintains a reputation for quality and performance, its marketing campaigns are often less visible or emotionally engaging compared to competitors like Nike or Adidas. By expanding its digital marketing presence, collaborating with popular influencers, and running interactive social campaigns, ASICS can connect better with younger audiences and build a stronger cultural presence.

Lastly, the brand's distribution channels are effective but still have room for improvement. Strengthening online platforms with better user experience and personalized services could help ASICS keep pace with modern shopping trends. Additionally, expanding physical store presence or launching pop-up stores in high-traffic areas could enhance brand visibility and customer interaction.

Overall, ASICS's marketing strategy is solid but can be optimized to meet changing consumer preferences. By adjusting each element of the marketing mix, the company can not only maintain its leadership in performance sportswear but also reach new markets and improve brand relevance in the future. These improvements will allow ASICS to stay competitive and continue to grow in a dynamic and fast-paced global market.

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