

Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantages in the Low-Tier Market: A Case Study of Mixue Ice City Under the 4P-STP Framework

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of increasingly fierce competition in China's ready-made tea beverage industry, lower-tier markets have become the core engine driving industrial growth. Mixue Ice Cream & Tea has achieved global scale expansion and industry-leading status by deeply cultivating lower-tier markets with a differentiated marketing model. This paper takes Mixue as the research object, based on STP market segmentation theory and 4P marketing mix theory, combined with IP marketing theory, systematically analyzes its marketing strategy implementation from the dimensions of market positioning, product portfolio, pricing system, channel expansion and brand communication, and explores the core logic of its competitive advantage formation relying on closed-loop supply chain, lightweight franchise model and personified IP marketing. The research finds that Mixue has constructed a "supply chain-price-channel-IP" closed-loop marketing system through high-quality and low-price product strategy, high-density offline channel layout and standardized franchise management, which not only consolidates its leading position in the mass tea beverage market but also supports its steady penetration into overseas markets. However, the brand is facing problems such as brand positioning solidification, franchise channel control gaps and lagging digital marketing capabilities in its development. Based on this, targeted optimization strategies are proposed to provide reference for the sustainable development of Mixue and the strategic formulation of small and medium-sized tea beverage brands.

Keywords: Mixue Bingcheng; Marketing Strategy; Lower-Tier Markets; Supply Chain Management; Brand IP

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's ready-made tea beverage industry has entered a new stage of large-scale and differentiated competition, with the market scale leaping from RMB 200 billion in 2019 to over RMB 400 billion in 2024. Driven by the rationalization of consumption and the development of county economies, lower-tier markets have contributed more than 60% of the industry's incremental growth, becoming the core track for tea beverage brands to expand market share. In this context, major tea beverage brands are shifting their development focus to "affordability, standardization and scale", and Mixue Ice Cream & Tea has stood out with its unique marketing model, becoming a typical case in the mass tea beverage market.

By the end of 2024, Mixue's global store count has exceeded 46,000, covering 31 provinces in mainland China and 11 overseas countries, with stores in third-tier and below cities accounting for 57.4% of the total. In 2024, the company achieved operating revenue of RMB 24.829 billion and a net profit of RMB 4.454 billion, ranking first in the industry in terms of global store network scale. Centered on the extreme price band of RMB 2-10, a fully self-sufficient supply chain and the "Snow King" super IP, Mixue's marketing system precisely matches the consumption demand of lower-tier markets and builds high competitive barriers, forming a development path different from mid-to-high-end brands such as Heytea and mid-priced brands such as Cha Bai Dao.

This study takes Mixue Ice Cream & Tea as the primary research object, with its marketing strategy in lower-tier markets as the core, covering product, pricing, channel, promotion and brand IP operation. The research time frame focuses on 2021-2024, covering its large-scale expansion, overseas business development and sub-brand incubation; the spatial scope centers on China's third-tier and below cities, and also involves Southeast Asian overseas markets. Selecting Cha Bai Dao and Auntie Shanghai as reference samples, this paper adopts the case study method to analyze Mixue's marketing practice logic, diagnoses existing problems and puts forward optimization suggestions.

This research has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it dissects Mixue's closed-loop marketing system, expands the application scenarios of classic marketing theories in lower-tier markets, and enriches the theoretical research on brand IP and emotional marketing in the tea beverage industry. Practically, it provides direct reference for Mixue's brand upgrading and franchise management, and offers replicable strategic paths for small and medium-sized tea beverage brands to penetrate lower-tier markets. The research follows the logic of "theoretical construction - status analysis - case dissection - problem diagnosis - countermeasure suggestion" to form a complete research framework.

2. Marketing Theories and Industry Characteristics of the Tea Beverage Sector

2.1. Core Theoretical Framework of Modern Marketing

(1) The 4P Marketing Mix Theory

The 4P theory, composed of Product, Price, Place and Promotion, is the core framework for formulating marketing tactics in the tea beverage industry (Kotler & Keller, 2021). In lower-tier markets, the application of this theory needs to be more targeted: products should focus on high-frequency necessities, prices should match mass consumption capacity, channels should be close to consumption scenarios, and promotions should balance low cost and strong communicability. Mixue's model of "extremely low-priced products + dense franchise channels + IP-linked promotions" is the accurate application of the 4P theory in lower-tier markets.

(2) STP Market Segmentation Theory

STP theory includes market Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning. Lower-tier tea beverage markets can be segmented by consumption scenario, capacity and demand, and brands need to clarify target groups and form differentiated positioning (Sheth & Sisodia, 2012). Mixue's positioning as the "leader in affordable tea beverages for lower-tier markets" follows this logic, taking price-sensitive mass consumers as the core target group and laying a strategic foundation for subsequent marketing tactics.

(3) IP Marketing Theory

IP marketing emphasizes building emotional connections with consumers through concrete and personified brand symbols, reducing marketing costs and enhancing user loyalty (Keller, 2019). In the tea beverage industry, IP marketing needs to combine mass aesthetics with consumption scenarios to form a "symbol + content + interaction" system. Mixue's "Snow King" IP achieves deep brand recognition penetration through animations, theme music and peripheral products, becoming a typical application of IP marketing in lower-tier markets.

2.2. Regulatory Trends in the Tea Beverage Industry Under the New Consumption Context

(1) Increasingly Stringent Food Safety Regulations

The State Administration for Market Regulation has issued a series of measures such as the Measures for the Supervision and Inspection of Food Production and Operation, requiring tea beverage brands to establish a full-chain quality traceability system. This trend drives brands to realize supply chain self-sufficiency and operational standardization. Mixue's 100% self-supply of core raw materials through five production bases and 27 regional warehouses is a typical response to regulatory requirements.

(2) Standardization and Upgrading of the Franchise Model

In response to franchise irregularities, regulators have strengthened requirements for brand qualification review, franchisee training and store supervision, and the industry is forming a model of "headquarters standardized output + regional supervision + digital control". Leading brands such as Mixue, Cha Bai Dao and Auntie Shanghai have all intensified franchisee training and store inspection to promote the standardized development of the franchise model.

(3) Heightened Compliance Requirements for Advertising and Marketing

Regulators have standardized tea beverage brands' advertising and marketing activities, prohibiting false advertising and price fraud, and driving the industry's marketing shift from "traffic-oriented" to "value-oriented". Brands are required to focus on product value and real consumption experience in their marketing communication, and build competitiveness through high-quality products and services.

2.3. Consumption Behavior and Marketing Characteristics in Lower-tier Tea Beverage Markets

(1) Consumption Behavior Characteristics

Consumers in lower-tier markets have four obvious characteristics: High Price Sensitivity, with per capita tea beverage budget concentrated in RMB 5-15 and "low price and high quality" as the core purchase factor; Strong Scenario Dependency, with main consumption scenarios in campuses, communities and county commercial districts, and store accessibility within 300 meters as a key competitive element; Prominent Social Attributes, with brand information easily spread through acquaintance social networks; Moderate Brand Loyalty, with consumer choices easily affected by promotions and location, but super IP and stable quality can effectively improve repurchase rates.

(2) Marketing Characteristics

Combined with the above consumption characteristics, Mixue has formed a distinctive marketing model: in pricing, it takes extreme low prices as the core, reducing costs through supply chain self-sufficiency to form price barriers; in channels, it adopts high-density layout, rapidly penetrating county markets through the franchise model; in promotion, it focuses on in-store promotions and social platform fission, with simple and highly communicable content; in brand building, it creates a mass and personified image, strengthening the "approachable and affordable" brand perception through the Snow King IP.

3. Development and Current Status of Mixue's Marketing System

3.1. Corporate Development History and Market Layout Data

(1) Development History

Founded in 1997 as a shaved ice shop in Zhengzhou, Mixue transformed to ready-made tea beverages in 2007, and its development can be divided into three stages: Supply Chain Foundation Period (2007-2017), establishing the first central factory in 2012 and focusing on core raw material self-production; IP Empowerment Period (2018-2020), launching the Snow King super IP in 2018 to enhance brand recognition; Scaled Expansion Period (2021-present), initiating overseas expansion in 2021 and surpassing 46,000 global stores by 2024, completing the transformation from a regional brand to a global leader.

(2) Market Layout Data

Store Scale: By the end of 2024, global stores total 46,479, including 41,584 in mainland China (89.47%) and 4,895 overseas (10.53%), mainly in Southeast Asia.

City Distribution: First-tier cities account for 4.8% (1,983 stores), new first-tier cities 19.6% (8,143 stores), second-tier cities 18.2% (7,600 stores), and third-tier and below cities 57.4% (23,858 stores), with lower-tier markets as the absolute core.

Business Structure: The core brand Mixue Ice Cream & Tea contributes over 90% of revenue, and the coffee sub-brand Lucky Cup has over 5,000 stores, forming a "tea beverage + coffee" dual-driver structure.

Financial Data (2024): Revenue RMB 24.829 billion (YoY +22.3%), including product sales revenue RMB 24.209 billion and franchise/service revenue RMB 0.620 billion, with a gross margin of 31.6% and a net profit margin of 17.9%.

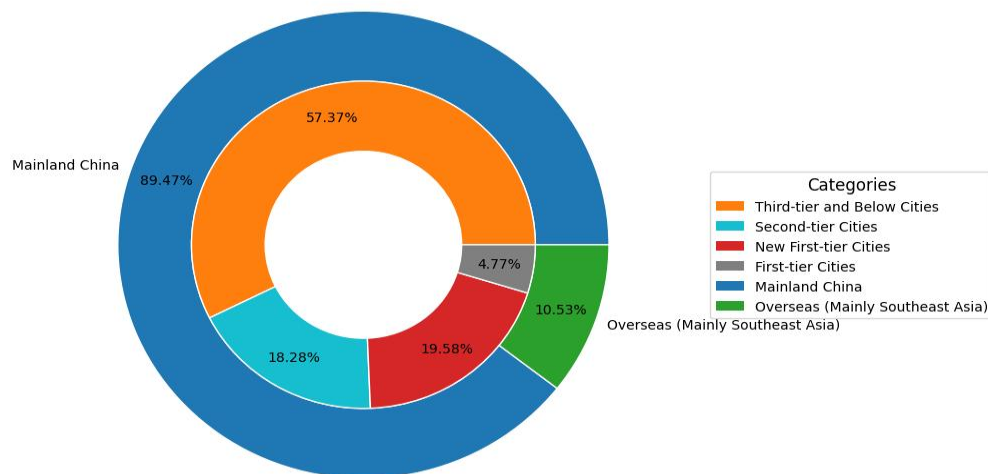


Figure 1. Pie chart of Mixue store distribution

3.2. Marketing System Construction Objectives and Business Coverage Dimensions

(1) Marketing System Construction Objectives

The core objective is to "capture the mindshare of lower-tier markets with extreme cost-effectiveness and build competitive barriers through scaled expansion". Short-term goal: Improve store density and single-store revenue in lower-tier markets; Medium-term goal: Strengthen Snow King IP recognition and user repurchase rate; Long-term goal: Achieve dual-brand synergy of "tea beverage + coffee" and expand overseas lower-tier markets.

(2) Business Coverage Dimensions

Product Dimension: Covers four categories of ready-made tea beverages, coffee, ice cream and snacks, with the core price band at RMB 2-10, balancing high-frequency necessities and scenario adaptability.

Channel Dimension: Centered on franchise stores (supplemented by 17 direct stores as brand display), building an offline network covering "counties - townships", and leveraging WeChat and Alipay Mini Programs for online order intake and member operation.

Target Audience Dimension: Core consumers are 15-35 years old in lower-tier markets, including students, white-collar workers and county residents, focusing on price-sensitive and convenience-pursuing mass groups.

Regional Dimension: Domestically covering all provincial administrative regions, overseas focusing on Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia), replicating the domestic lower-tier market marketing model.

3.3. Comparison of Marketing System with Tea Beverage Industry Benchmark Models

(1) Comparison with Cha Bai Dao

As of June 2025, Cha Bai Dao has 8,444 stores, focusing on new first-tier and second-tier cities (45.4% combined), with a lower proportion in lower-tier markets than Mixue. Its core price band is RMB 10-16, lacking Mixue's cost advantage from supply chain self-sufficiency. Cha Bai Dao emphasizes digital marketing and high-frequency new product iteration (55 new products in H1 2025), while Mixue focuses on IP marketing and scaled promotions. In the franchise model, Cha Bai Dao has 5,833 franchisees (1.4 stores per capita), while Mixue has 20,976 franchisees (2.2 stores per capita), forming a lighter and faster-expanding franchise system.

(2) Comparison with Auntie Shanghai

Auntie Shanghai takes "fruit and vegetable tea" as its differentiated selling point, with a core price band of RMB 7-22. As of June 2025, it has 9,436 stores, with 51.1% in third-tier and below cities (lower than Mixue's 57.4%), and its overseas expansion is in the initial stage (only 1 store in Malaysia). It adopts high-cost marketing methods such as celebrity endorsements (signing Ju Jingyi in 2025), while Mixue relies on Snow King IP for low-cost self-marketing. In supply chain, Auntie Shanghai has 13 logistics centers and 1 production base, with a far lower degree of self-sufficiency than Mixue's 5 production bases and 27 warehouses.

(3) Summary of Core Differences

Mixue Ice City's "supply chain-price-channel" closed loop is not a simple superposition of advantages from individual links, but a synergistic effect of two-way empowerment. The fully autonomous production of the supply chain not only directly reduces raw material costs, but also lays a foundation for the rapid expansion of franchise channels through standardized quality control. Meanwhile, the large-scale layout of the franchise system further increases the volume of raw material procurement, which in turn lowers the unit cost of the supply chain, forming a positive cycle of cost and scale. In contrast, Chabaidao's digital marketing and new product iteration lack the cost support of the supply chain, making it difficult to penetrate the low-tier market; while Shanghai Auntie's differentiated positioning of fruit and vegetable tea, due to its low self-sufficiency rate in the supply chain, cannot achieve price reduction, and its high-cost marketing through celebrity endorsements is also disconnected from the consumption logic of the low-tier market. This closed loop enables Mixue Ice City to establish a triple barrier of "cost-scale-brand" in the low-tier market, making it difficult for competitors to replicate the entire link in a short period of time.

4. Case Analysis of Core Marketing Strategy Implementation at Mixue

4.1.Scenario-Based Marketing Practices (Campus/Community/Commercial District) (Schmitt,1999)

(1) Campus Scenario: Driven by High-Frequency Necessities and Social Attributes

Aiming at students' high consumption frequency, price sensitivity and strong social needs, campus stores launch "Second Cup Half-Price" and student-exclusive coupons, matching peak consumption times such as breaks and after school. During the start of semesters and graduation seasons, "Snow King on Campus" activities are held, with peripheral giveaways and themed check-ins to enhance brand recognition. For example, the 2024 back-to-school season "Back-to-School Limited Set" in 2,000 universities drove a 35% week-on-week revenue increase through campus social group fission.

(2) Community Scenario: Adapted for Convenience and Approachability

Community stores focus on daily consumption and family scenarios (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021), offering "Family Share Packs" and buy-get promotions. Operating hours are optimized to match resident habits, with a "Quick Pick-up" service to reduce wait times. By sponsoring square dance competitions and parent-child activities, the brand integrates into community life. A Zhengzhou community store achieved a 40% member repurchase rate (far exceeding the industry average) through community charity events and resident member groups.

(3) Commercial District Scenario: Combining Traffic Aggregation and Brand Display

In county commercial districts and township markets, Mixue adopts a "large store + prominent signage" layout, highlighting the Snow King IP to attract passersby. It launches limited-time discounts and spend-to-save activities matching market days and holidays, and carries out cross-promotions with surrounding merchants for mutual traffic guidance. For example, a Southeast Asian commercial district store's 2024 Spring Festival "New Year Limited Snow King Set" (incorporating local customs) achieved daily sales of over 1,000 cups and became a social media check-in spot.

4.2. Case Study of Product-Price-Channel-Promotion Strategy Combination

(1) Product Strategy: Combining Extreme Cost-Effectiveness with Standardization

Mixue focuses on high-frequency necessities, simplifies SKUs, and maintains core products (Fresh Lemon Water, Original Flavor Ice Cream) at RMB 2-4 for a long time, with quality guaranteed by supply chain self-sufficiency. In 2024, its self-developed fresh milk base improved product taste while controlling costs through scaled production, with Fresh Milk Tea priced at only RMB 8 (far lower than competitors' RMB 12-15). Seasonal products (summer bayberry drinks, winter hot beverages) are launched to maintain product freshness without high R&D costs.

(2) Pricing Strategy: Dual Support from Cost Leadership and Price Anchoring

Leveraging 100% self-supply of core raw materials (Porter,2008), Mixue reduces intermediate logistics costs by over 30% through direct supply from production bases to stores, supporting the RMB 2-10 price band. It adopts a "price anchoring" strategy: low-priced core products attract

customer traffic, driving sales of medium-priced products (e.g., RMB 10 fruit tea series), forming a "low price for traffic + medium price for profitability" structure, balancing consumer demand and brand profitability.

(3) Channel Strategy: Franchise-Driven and High-Density Coverage

Mixue Ice City's asset-light franchise model is not a simple "low-threshold investment attraction", but a standardized output system with strong headquarter control. Franchisees are only responsible for basic operational investment, while the headquarters minimizes the trial-and-error cost of single-store operation through unified direct supply of raw materials, store decoration SOP, and standardized staff training. At the same time, the headquarters implements a "regional protection + dynamic assessment" mechanism for franchise stores, strictly controlling the number of stores in each county-level market to avoid internal vicious competition, and imposing rectification within a time limit or termination of contracts on stores that fail to meet product quality and service process standards. This "decentralized yet controlled" franchise model not only ensures the speed of channel expansion, but also safeguards the brand's foundation, serving as the core support for its high-density coverage in the low-tier market.

(4) Promotion Strategy: Combining IP Linkage and Low-Cost Communication

Promotions center on the Snow King IP: the 2024 animation Snow King's Fantasy Desert and offline "Watch & Win Free Drink" activity drove a 25% sales increase. Through social platforms, content such as the Snow King theme song and IP stickers encourages UGC, with the #Mixue Ice Cream & Tea hashtag gaining over 43.5 billion Douyin views by the end of 2024. The membership system (point redemption, exclusive discounts) enhances repurchase rates, with member-contributed revenue accounting for 35%.

4.3. Practical Cases of Brand IP and Customer Relationship Management

(1) Creation of the "Snow King" Super IP: Personification and Scenario-Based Penetration

Launched in 2018, the Snow King IP with its cute cartoon image and "Sweetness and Love" concept quickly gained recognition. A complete IP ecosystem is built through multi-dimensional output: animations such as Snow King is Here have cumulative views exceeding 500 million; the theme song Mixue Ice Cream & Tea is Sweet achieved nationwide popularity; peripheral products (dolls, keychains) enhance emotional connections. Integrating the IP into store design and product packaging forms visual unity and strengthens brand recall.

(2) Customer Relationship Management: Membership System and Digital Operations

A digital membership platform integrating WeChat/Alipay Mini Programs and APP is established (Payne & Frow, 2005), with over 100 million members by the end of 2024. Tiered operations provide new member coupons and loyal member point redemption/birthday benefits to enhance stickiness. Big data analyzes consumption habits for precise promotion: high-frequency consumers receive spend-to-save coupons, while low-frequency consumers get comeback coupons, increasing the member repurchase rate to 35%. Member feedback channels enable

timely response to demands, optimizing products and services to improve satisfaction (Reinartz&Kumar,2002).

5. Diagnosis of Existing Problems in Mixue's Marketing System

5.1. Marketing Positioning Deviation in Brand Upgrading

Long-term reliance on the "low-price" label has formed a deep-rooted mass brand image, making it difficult to penetrate mid-to-high-end markets. As lower-tier market consumption upgrades, some consumers pursue quality and experience, but Mixue's marketing still focuses on low prices, failing to convey quality upgrade information and leading to the loss of potential consumers. The sub-brand Lucky Cup is positioned in the low-price coffee market, overlapping with the main brand and failing to form differentiation, affecting brand matrix synergy.

5.2. Channel Control Gaps Under the Franchise Model

With the number of franchise stores exceeding 46,000, Mixue Ice City's control pressure has grown exponentially, and the imbalance in regional control capacity has become particularly prominent. In first- and second-tier cities, stores are highly dense with concentrated regulatory resources, resulting in a high degree of standardization; however, in county and township markets, stores are scattered with large regulatory radii, and some stores have problems such as non-standard raw material storage, simplified production processes, and perfunctory service attitudes, and even privately adjust product portions and increase prices, which seriously damage the brand's "high cost-performance" image. In addition, marketing activities of franchise stores in various regions lack coordination, and some stores launch unauthorized low-price promotions to compete for customers, breaking the headquarters' price system and causing regional market price chaos, which not only compresses single-store profits, but also weakens the overall marketing effect of the brand.

5.3. Lag in Digital Marketing Capability Building

Compared with Cha Bai Dao and Auntie Shanghai, Mixue's digital capabilities have obvious shortcomings: member operations rely on basic coupon delivery, lacking personalized and refined management; online marketing depends on spontaneous IP content dissemination, without proactive digital planning and user interaction; some stores still use traditional bookkeeping, failing to optimize efficiency through data analysis. Overseas digital layout lags, failing to adapt to local social platforms and payment tools, affecting overseas marketing effectiveness.

6. Optimization Path and Practice for Mixue's Marketing Strategy

6.1. Formulation of Differentiated Optimization Strategies

(1) Brand Positioning Upgrade: Dual Communication of Cost-Effectiveness + Quality

While maintaining the core positioning of high cost-effectiveness, strengthen quality communication through supply chain transparency videos (showing raw material production and

transportation) to convey the "low price does not mean low quality" concept. Empower Lucky Cup with a differentiated positioning of "affordable premium coffee", complementing the main brand and expanding the consumer base, avoiding positioning overlap.

(2) Franchise Management Optimization: Digital Control + Empowerment Upgrade

At the level of digital control, Mixue Ice City can build an intelligent store supervision platform, realizing full-process traceability of product production, raw material usage, and service processes through real-time linkage of POS systems, store cameras, and raw material inventory data. Once non-standard operations are detected, the system automatically sends early warnings to regional supervisors for immediate rectification. At the empowerment level, the headquarters can customize personalized marketing plans for franchise stores in different regions and consumption scenarios, and launch online-offline integrated operation training courses to improve franchisees' store management and customer service capabilities, transforming franchise stores from "passive execution" to "active operation" and realizing the interest binding between the headquarters and franchisees.

(3) Digital Marketing Upgrade: Refined Operations + Omni-Channel Integration

Build a big data marketing platform to analyze member consumption behavior (Neslin & Shankar, 2009), realizing personalized product recommendations and promotion delivery (e.g., seasonal beverage discounts for students, family share packs for family users). Expand online channels with Douyin and Xiaohongshu live commerce and KOL collaborations to increase brand exposure. Promote online-offline integration with "online order + store pick-up" and "offline consumption + online points" to enhance user experience.

6.2. Safeguard Measures for Strategy Implementation

(1) Organizational Safeguard: Establishment of a Marketing Upgrade Task Force

Led by senior executives, form a cross-departmental task force with members from marketing, supply chain, franchise management and digitalization departments. Clarify departmental responsibilities and key timelines to coordinate strategy optimization and implementation, avoiding inter-departmental coordination issues and disordered implementation.

(2) Technical Safeguard: Increased Digital Investment

Allocate special funds to build a big data platform, promote the upgrade of store digital equipment, and develop comprehensive franchisee management and member operation systems. Introduce professional digital marketing talents to strengthen team building and reserve core capabilities for long-term digital marketing development.

(3) Supply Chain Safeguard: Continuous Optimization of Cost and Quality

Deepen supply chain self-sufficiency, expand production base capacity and extend the global procurement network to further compress costs. Establish a full-chain quality traceability system to strengthen raw material quality control, ensuring stable product quality and providing data support for subsequent quality communication.

6.3. Quantitative Analysis of Post-Optimization Marketing Effectiveness

(1) Short-Term Effects (1-2 Years)

Brand Image: Significantly improve brand awareness and favorability among mid-to-high-end consumer groups in lower-tier markets (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

Franchise Management: Substantially increase store standardized operation compliance rate and noticeably decrease consumer complaint rate by more than 40%.

Digital Marketing: Steadily increase member repurchase rate to over 45%, and raise online revenue proportion from the current level to over 20% (Rust et al., 2004).

(2) Long-Term Effects (3-5 Years)

Market Share: Further increase lower-tier market share by over 10%, and surpass 10,000 overseas stores.

Revenue Structure: Increase medium-to-higher priced product revenue proportion to over 30%, and raise Lucky Cup's revenue contribution to over 15%.

Brand Value: Evolve into a mass tea beverage leader recognized for both cost-effectiveness and quality, with brand value expected to surpass RMB 50 billion.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Core Conclusions on Mixue's Marketing Strategy

The essence of Mixue's success is the construction of a "supply chain-price-channel-IP" closed-loop marketing system: achieving cost leadership through a fully self-sufficient supply chain to support the extreme RMB 2-10 price band; realizing high-density lower-tier market coverage through a lightweight franchise model; reducing marketing costs and strengthening brand recognition through the Snow King super IP; enhancing user stickiness through scenario-based marketing and refined member operations. However, its marketing system has prominent problems such as brand positioning solidification, franchise channel control gaps and lagging digital marketing capabilities, which need to be solved through positioning upgrade, franchisee empowerment and digital transformation.

7.2. Marketing Insights for Small and Medium-Sized Tea Beverage Brands

(1) Supply Chain is the Core Barrier for Affordable Tea Beverages

In the affordable tea beverage market, supply chain capability determines sustainable profitability (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Reducing costs through scaled procurement and self-production supports a high-cost-effectiveness pricing strategy, avoiding the "low price and low quality" vicious cycle and building sustainable competitive advantages.

(2) Focus on Scenario Adaptability in the Low-Tier Market

The consumption scenarios in the low-tier market are characterized by strong localization and high daily frequency. Brands must abandon the "one-size-fits-all" marketing approach, optimize

product portfolios and promotion methods according to the different needs of campuses, communities, and township business districts. For example, launch portable, cost-effective combo packages for the market culture of township fairs; carry out neighborhood group buying and point sharing activities for the acquaintance socializing in county communities, so that marketing can integrate into local life and truly establish consumers' brand recognition.

(3) Franchise Models Require Balancing Expansion and Control

The franchise model is crucial for rapid expansion but carries control risks. Adopting a "low barriers + strong support + strict control" system, leveraging digital tools to improve supervision efficiency, and providing full-process franchisee support ensures unified brand image and service standards during rapid expansion.

(4) Creating Differentiated IPs to Reduce Marketing Costs

In the information explosion era, product-only marketing struggles to attract attention. Creating a personified IP aligned with brand positioning, and building emotional connections with consumers through multi-dimensional content output, enables low-cost brand communication, enhances brand distinctiveness and establishes unique brand recall.

7.3. Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study focuses on Mixue's domestic lower-tier market marketing practices, with insufficient depth in overseas market cultural adaptation and sub-brand synergistic marketing. Future research can further explore Mixue's marketing innovation in overseas markets and the "tea beverage + coffee" dual-brand synergy model, providing more comprehensive reference for its multi-category and globalization expansion. Expanding the sample scope to compare marketing models of tea beverage brands of different scales can also extract more universal industry insights.

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