

# Research on the marketing strategies of mainstream fast fashion and luxury clothing brands based on the 4P model: a case study of Zara and Prada

Ziying Wang\*

Admiral Farragut Academy Tianjin, Tianjin, 300021, China

**Abstract.** With the continuous improvement of people's living standards and the development of the fashion industry, people's demand for different styles of fashion is also increasing. Therefore, the fashion industry has derived fast fashion brands and luxury brands to meet the fashion needs of the public. In the continually evolving fashion industry, marketing has emerged as an integral component for brands to achieve rapid market competitiveness. By employing the 4Ps theory, this study conducts a comparative analysis of the marketing strategies adopted by Zara and Prada, elucidating the mechanisms by which fast fashion labels and luxury brands respectively entice customers and sustain their positioning within the fashion sector. The results show that Zara attracts young consumers mainly through the characteristics of fast production speed and low price of products, as well as through social media publicity and online and offline sales. Prada is characterized by exquisite craftsmanship and high prices, combined with the hiring of brand spokespersons and the shaping of the atmosphere of brand boutiques to attract customers with high consumption power. The outcomes of this study provide the fashion industry stakeholders with a theoretical framework and effective solutions to address the different preferences of consumers and the market situation.

## 1 Introduction

Food, clothing, housing, and transportation represent indispensable components of human life. People's demand for clothes changes with The Times. People's Daily dress style is influenced by different factors, such as personal preferences, job requirement and so on. At the same time, different styles of clothing also show different impressions to others. For instance, at work, wearing formal and professional clothes is easier to gain the trust of customers. In addition, the changeable fashion trend also affects the social population's demand for a variety of clothing all the time. Therefore, in order to cope with changing trends and consumer preferences, the clothing industry has gradually developed two distinctive styles of clothing brands, fast fashion brands and luxury brands. The popularity of fast fashion

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\* Corresponding author: [Marilyn.liu@turtlebayedu.com](mailto:Marilyn.liu@turtlebayedu.com)

brands has been high in recent years, and the fashion trend products and the rapid production speed have quickly swept the world and won the love of many consumers.

Taking Zara as an example, its brand's fashion degree and the fast speed of production quickly aroused the pursuit of young people, and the brand benefit continued to improve. Zara also uses the proceeds to expand its influence and increase its competitiveness in the clothing market. Luxury brands have always led the fashion trend with high-end product design, and the heat has been high, and the favor of many customer groups has been harvested. Take Prada as an example, both its store style and service are highly consistent with the brand style. The material and design style of the products attract high attention from the market and lead the fashion trend.

However, the two are bound to compete with each other in the clothing industry, their unique advantages can not only quickly attract consumers, but also improve brand efficiency. By comparing the different business models and marketing strategies of Zara and Prada, to provide feasible practical methods for the fashion industry is conducive to formulating the future business planning of enterprises.

By employing the 4p theory, this study conducts in-depth research on the marketing strategies of Zara and Prada from four aspects: product, price, promotion and place and hence find out how they are further optimizing their brand while maintaining their position in such a competitive apparel market. The study is mainly divided into four aspects: brand introduction, strategy analysis, strategy comparison and future planning. First, by understanding the history of the brand, analyzing the success of the brand, brand positioning and product line, etc., we can infer how these factors affect the subsequent development of the brand. Secondly, further analysing the unique advantages of the two different styles of industries in the market and compare the shortcomings of the brands through strategic analysis. Finally, in view of the brand shortage, combined with the current world environment for the future development and strategy of the brand optimization space and methods.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 4Ps Theory

The 4Ps theory is a foundational concept proposed by American scholar E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960. He initially introduced this theory in his seminal work, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach* [1]. The 4p theory provide an efficient structured framework of marketing, facilitating business to formulate a clear marketing strategy. Components of 4p theory are product, price, promotion, place.

Product, the good offered by business to satisfy consumers' need. Business needs to consider the feature of its product, involving quality and design, to meet demands for overall market and differentiate from other industries in the same field. Price, the amount of money that costumers need to pay for a product. The consideration of price setting includes the value of product, financial ability of target audience. Promotion, the strategy of attracting target consumers and it encompass advertisement, public relation. Place, the channels and distribution methods, usually covers market coverage, retail location, ensuring the product is available in convenient locations for the target market.

### 2.2 Zara introduction

Zara is a world-renowned fast fashion retail brand, founded in Spain in 1975, part of the Inditex Group. Since its establishment, Zara has developed rapidly and become one of the world's most competitive fast fashion brands. Zara has a variety of different product lines,

including perfume, cosmetics, jewelry and clothing. Among them, in the clothing line, Zara has launched men's, women's and children's clothing products to meet the needs of different customers. In order to explore the Chinese market, Zara opened its first official flagship store in Hong Kong in 2012[2]. Due to the accurate analysis of the market economic environment and in-depth understanding of the economic situation, the brand successfully positioned the accurate market, which also laid a solid foundation for the brand to realize the 4p marketing strategy.

### **2.3 Prada introduction**

Prada is a luxury fashion brand founded by Mario Prada in Milan, Italy in 1913. In 1919 Prada became an official supplier to the Italian royal family. This laid the foundation for the later brand's luxury and high-end positioning. As of 2021, Prada's official website shows that Prada has: clothing, jewelry, watches, perfume, high heels, backpacks and other products, and provides customized clothing services for customers [3]. Prada is positioned in the upscale luxury market, and its target customer group is high-income consumers who pursue fashion and high taste. Prada is known for its innovative and classic design style. The brand skillfully blends traditional craftsmanship with modern elements to create unique avant-garde fashion pieces. Prada's design includes simple and elegant classic style, as well as bold and avant-garde innovative design, which attracts many fashion lovers and celebrities.

## **3 Marketing strategy of Zara based on 4Ps theory**

### **3.1 Product**

Zara provides consumers with a variety of different product categories, including men's, women's and children's wear, from basic to popular styles. Because of this, Zara's target market is not only a specific sector, but for the entire clothing market. In addition, the products launched by Zara also cover different life scenes, such as swimsuits, which meet the needs of consumers for seaside holiday clothing. Also, Zara also has a line of home wear. Thus, Zara has surpassed many other fast fashion brands from its diversified product categories, truly covering the daily needs of consumers. Secondly, from the aspect of accessories, Zara, as a fast fashion brand, combines the current fashion trend to cater to the public's preferences and launches fashion items such as earrings, necklaces and backpacks. When customers buy a brand's clothes, they also buy accessories to match them. This not only provides convenience for consumers, but also facilitates brand sales.

### **3.2 Price**

Zara combines different factors in pricing, making the price reasonable for consumers and ensuring the brand's income. First, Zara takes into account consumer differences in different markets. Take a dress of Zara brand as an example, the price of this product is 29.95 euros on the Spanish brand's official website, while the price of this product is 55.10 euros on the Saudi Arabia official website (exchange rate: UTC 2024/7/11, 20:56), the price has increased by 83.97% [4]. Secondly, with the rapid development of fashion brands, Inditex, the parent company of Zara, is facing the problem of slowing down the sales growth rate. Garcia Marcelas chose to strengthen the brand positioning of Zara into a high-end brand. At this point, Zara's competition will be distinct from other fast fashion brands to a certain extent, enhance the brand competitiveness. As a result, in 2022, the average price of Zara's products increased by 12.2% year-on-year [4].

### 3.3 Promotion

Zara uses a combination of different strategies to promote. First, Zara promotes the brand's latest products through its official website and social media (popular platforms such as Facebook and Instagram). Through big data analysis and push to the target customer group, this way quickly attracted the Generation z consumer group represented by teenagers. Secondly, Zara's business model of "fast, limited quantities, and multi-style" also complies with the development of The Times. With the development of the Internet, people will learn different information in a short time every day, and the fashion trend changes faster Zara's business model can determine the latest fashion trends through data analysis and quickly produce products of the same style to meet consumers' demand for fashion. The attribute of limited production quantities not only mitigates the issue of sluggish sales for Zara, but also instigates consumers to develop a sense of urgency, leading them to believe that missing the opportunity to purchase may result in inability to secure the item, thereby enhancing sales figures. In addition, Zara is considered by many to be a clothing brand that does not invest in advertising. This is because fashion brands other than Zara invest about 3.5% of their income in product promotion, while inditex, the parent company of Zara, invests only 0.3% of its total income in promotion. But this doesn't mean Zara isn't promoting it. Zara pays great attention to the location of its stores, and the special location of its stores brings many advantages to Zara (detailed description in 3.4) [5].

### 3.4 Place

Zara adopts online and offline sales to meet the needs of different customer groups. Zara has brand retail stores in many countries around the world, and retail stores are located in the high streets of cities. The shopping atmosphere in the high streets also conforms to the style of Zara as a fast fashion brand, and also increases the brand exposure. However, in order to adapt to the transformation of high-end brand positioning, the number of Zara's global stores in 2022 has decreased by 662 compared with 2021, while the average sales area of its single store has increased by 37 square meters [4]. This change has greatly improved the shopping experience of consumers in offline physical stores and is conducive to the transformation of brand positioning. For online sales channels, consumers can choose products through shopping platforms and brand official websites. This sales method mainly responds to customers who do not have Zara brand retail stores in their cities, and also improves the convenience of purchasing. Zara's logistics center can even deliver the products ordered by customers to all parts of the world within 48 hours, increasing consumers' satisfaction with shopping, which is conducive to brand reputation and attracting more customers to a certain extent.

## 4 Marketing strategy of Prada based on 4Ps theory

### 4.1 Product

Prada has a variety of product lines, such as men's wear, women's wear, children's wear, backpacks, jewelry and other products to meet the needs of different consumers. Firstly, Prada is also creative in the material of the product. Muicca Prada, as a brand designer, launched a leather bag made of nylon fabric, which quickly set off a fashion trend. Prada applies this material, which can represent the characteristics of the brand, to different kinds of products under its brand, such as shirts and pants. This behavior further highlights the difference between Prada products and other luxury brands, further shaping the brand

personality while leaving a deep impression on consumers. Additionally, as a luxury brand, it is vital to have a unique brand identity. For instance, the inverted triangle iron logo only appears in Prada's leather clothing line. To a certain degree, this scarce brand logo can be deemed an innovative iteration of the brand's identity, thereby attracting public attention to its leather apparel collection. At the same time, this special logo can also be used to reduce the number of pirates and protect the copyright of the brand design.

## 4.2 Price

As Prada's products are positioned in the high-end market, their prices are relatively high, and the target customers are naturally those with high consumption power. Unlike some fast-fashion brands, Prada maintains price stability and rarely offers significant promotions or discounts. This strategy is not only to maintain a high-quality brand image, but also an important long-term market positioning tool for the luxury industry, which also helps to strengthen the originality of the brand. Frequent discounting activities may dilute this feeling, leading to a decline in consumers' perceived value of the brand. Besides, comparing with other luxury brands, the price of Prada products is relatively low, which also provides more room for price growth for Prada. For example, The Twist bag from Louis Vuitton, is priced at around \$4,100, while the Galleria bag from Prada is priced approximately at \$2,450 [4,6]. First of all, low prices compared to competitors in the same industry help Prada attract diversified customers. Compared with customers with high spending power, young people with a certain level of consumption are more likely to be attracted by this pricing feature. This group in the pursuit of fashion luxury at the same time, will also take into account their own purchasing power, so cheaper luxury brands like Prada are often more able to win the favor of these customer groups. Additionally, due to the different pricing of Prada's commodities in different countries, the personal shopper market (the behavior of buying goods from the low-price market and reselling them to customers in the high-price market to make profits from the price difference) has gradually affected the sales revenue of Prada. For example, Prada's prices in China are 35% to 50% higher than in Europe (freight and tariff issues included in international trade), and Prada now controls the price difference between the two markets to between 10% and 15% [7]. This measure can diminish profit for personal shoppers, thereby reducing the undesirable practice of buying and reselling products, and restoring the profits that Prada rightfully deserves.

## 4.3 Promotion

As a luxury brand, Prada is also like many other brands, signed a large number of traffic stars as brand spokespeople. First of all, for the young market, Prada chose Enhypen, a popular boy band in South Korea, as its brand spokesperson in 2023, which successfully obtained a media and over 40 million US dollars audio value for Prada. In today's Internet era, Kpop stars, as the focus of attention of the young generation, their endorsement products will inevitably cause the favor and choice of fan groups. On the contrary, Prada's former brand spokespersons (CAI Xukun, Li Yifeng, etc.) were exposed to negative news one after another, thus hurriedly ending the cooperation with the brand. However, the choice of an inappropriate spokesperson did not deal a severe blow to Prada. To certain extent, it successfully sparked social discussion, garnering significant attention (the 'Prada spokesperson curse'), and increased the brand's visibility. Moreover, Prada held a fashion show also caused hot discussion. By inviting brand spokespeople and popular artists to increase the attention of the fashion show, while showing the brand's new season in the fashion show, making the brand's new products quickly enter the public vision. Besides, On September 21, 2021, Prada held a special limited time event at 318 Urumqi Middle Road, Shanghai. Prada has put the brand

logo all over the vegetable market, with the words "Feel Like Prada" on the wrapping paper of vegetables. At the same time, consumers can get a Prada printed bag when they spend at least 20 yuan. This event not only made the brand full of a sense of life, but also further increased the discussion and exposure of the brand [8].

#### **4.4 Place**

Prada adopts a combination of online and offline sales. Prada's official website has the function of shopping, providing consumers with a more convenient way to shop [3]. For offline physical stores, Prada pays attention to the fit between stores and brand positioning. As of 2023, Prada has stores in more than 70 countries. Most of these stores are located in shopping malls in big cities, which are closely related to the target customer groups of the brand, thus saving publicity costs and ensuring the success rate of transactions and improving brand profits. For online sales, Prada first started its e-commerce platform in 2018 and has achieved phased results. In the first half of the year alone, turnover in the Asia-Pacific region increased by 0.4% to €463 million, accounting for 32% of total sales [9]. Prada's distribution network covers the world and, through a combination of direct management and authorized distribution, ensures the brand's presence and influence in every major market. In North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, Prada has stable and effective sales channels. What's more, Prada has duty-free shops and specialty stores in many international airports. These stores are not only important windows for brand display but also contribute significantly to the brand's sales revenue.

## **5 Comparison of marketing strategy of Zara and Prada**

### **5.1 Differences in product strategy**

Zara's fast production speed enables its brand to quickly respond to the challenges of changing fashion styles in the market, produce and issue goods in line with fashion trends in the market in a short period of time, and quickly arouse customers' desire. Instead, Prada pays more attention to the quality and design of its products. Therefore, Prada is often the party that leads to the change of fashion style, rather than a follower of fashion like Zara. In terms of products, Prada has the absolute main advantage of fashion trends, which is conducive to shaping the unique image of the brand.

### **5.2 Difference in price strategy**

The price of Zara and Prada's goods depends on the spending power of consumers in the target market. Since Zara is mostly targeted at young people who follow fashion, Zara's pricing range is relatively low to gain the favor of target customers. Due to the influence of the high-end Zara brand, the price of its products is also rising. At the same time as prices rise, Zara will also face the risk of reducing the number of customers. It is because Zara's target customers are young people who have already worked, and they basically do not have the ability to buy luxury goods. Although Zara can make profits by raising prices, it is difficult to evaluate the lost customer profits. Even if this strategy attracts new customers, Zara may not attract a certain number of new customers in a short time, so its turnover may not recover in a short time.

However, since Prada's main customer groups are high-income and fashion-seeking people, Prada's products are priced at a high price. In order to gain benefits, the price of the brand must be higher than the cost (the cost of materials and design of Prada products is high),

and the high price also reflects the high-end quality of Prada products to a certain extent, winning the trust of the target group. Moreover, because the pricing of Prada is generally lower than other luxury goods, it means that Prada has become the best choice for people with middle income level, increasing the competitive advantage with other luxury brands.

### **5.3 Difference in promotion strategy**

In order to arouse young consumers' desire to buy, Zara publishes brand product promotion on popular social software to quickly attract the eyes of young consumers and increase brand exposure. Prada, on the other hand, chooses to invite many popular stars as brand ambassadors. This behavior has not only aroused widespread concern in the society, but because of the star's growing fan base, they may choose to buy the star's same product or even promote it to people around them in order to support the star. Therefore, Prada's brand awareness and exposure will be greatly improved. Thus, in terms of online marketing, Prada has more advantages in a way.

### **5.4 Difference in place strategy**

Zara and Prada have adopted a combination of online and offline sales model. In terms of offline sales channels, Zara's physical stores are mainly opened in high street areas with high traffic, increasing the brand's exposure to young people. The location of Prada's physical store is a luxury shopping mall consistent with the brand image, which also means that customers here have a certain consumption power to buy Prada products. For physical stores, Prada pays more attention to the fit between the offline store atmosphere and the brand than Zara. For the online channel, Zara and Prada have roughly the same sales approach. However, thanks to the fast production speed of Zara products, the replenishment time of Zara is shorter than that of Prada, which can better meet the buying needs of the public.

## **6 Future development suggestion**

Environmental protection is a hot topic in today's society, so for clothing brands, the environmentally friendly production process and the use of environmentally friendly product materials can win the praise of consumers [10]. By leading by example, environmental protection behavior will further enhance brand awareness, and consumers are inclined to buy goods that can bring benefits to the environment, thus greatly increasing brand benefits. Additionally, through the joint launch of collaborative products with popular designers and artists, the brand's topic and exposure will continue to increase. Co-branding with national culture (special festivals, etc.) and museums can increase the brand attention of different countries, while increasing the brand reputation, cultural relevance will also be further improved. For Prada, the launch of limited-edition product series, the uniqueness and scarcity of its products can increase the brand appeal, thus improving the brand market positioning to a certain extent. For Zara, enhancing the uniqueness of its products is key. Zara's products have always been subject to plagiarism, which is also an important reason why consumers are reluctant to choose Zara. Besides, the positioning of fast fashion brands is relatively vague for the public, which also makes consumer groups will not think of Zara and other fast fashion brands in the first time when shopping. To be more specific, Zara's clothing covers a variety of different styles. Not distinctive clothing characteristics mean that the brand does not have its own characteristics, such a brand is often not competitive in the market [11]. Therefore, for the problem of plagiarism, innovative design can reduce consumers' doubts about the

brand, but also conducive to the development of high-end brands and maintain their position in the market.

## 7 Conclusion

In this study, the 4P model is used to conduct a detailed analysis of the marketing strategies of Zara fast fashion brand and Prada brand, and various strategies and unique advantages are identified in terms of product, price, advertising and channel. With the help of comparative analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn.

On the one hand, Zara relies on fast production and fashion sense in its product strategy to meet the fast fashion needs of young consumers, quickly capture market trends, and bring new products to market. On the other hand, Prada insists on high quality and classic design based on luxury materials and exquisite craftsmanship, which attracts high-end customers who seek quality and unique design.

Secondly, Zara pursues a cheap strategy in terms of pricing strategy, reducing costs through mass production and fast sales, as well as attracting a large number of consumers at affordable prices. On the contrary, due to limited production and high prices, Prada emphasizes the positioning of rarity and high quality of Prada and adheres to the high price strategy in response to the pursuit of consumer identity and taste.

In terms of advertising strategy, Zara has quickly captured the attention of young consumers, focusing on social networking and online marketing, partnering with Internet celebrities, and using social platforms for advertising. On the other side, Prada pays attention to maintaining the brand image by holding high-quality fashion shows in order to improve the brand's image and influence. In addition, Prada signed hot stars to become brand spokespersons, increasing brand discussion and also causing hot discussion among consumers.

Due to the extensive presence of physical stores and a strong online platform, Zara has introduced an omnichannel strategy in terms of channel strategy, which combines online and offline channels for consumers. Prada has also implemented a multi-channel sales strategy. Prada pays more attention to the image of boutiques and improves the image of luxury and shopping through well-designed flagship stores and elite shopping centers. At the same time, Prada is gradually strengthening the creation of online channels to adapt to the buying habits of modern consumers.

According to the above analysis, Zara and Prada have their own characteristics in the four aspects of the 4P model and show strong competitiveness in their respective market positioning. With its rapid response to market demand and low-cost strategy, Zara successfully conquered the fast fashion market, while Prada firmly occupied the luxury market with high-quality products and expensive strategies. Both of these successful experiences provide valuable reference materials for other brands.

In the future, Zara and Prada can maintain their leading position in the luxury market through innovation and cultural integration. In addition, brands can make changes to their products in response to the hot topic of environmental protection. This not only benefits the world's environment, but also creates an environmentally friendly image for the brand. Thanks to continuous optimization and innovation, both can develop and create more value in their respective fields, but the brand's marketing strategy will also change with the development of The Times. Future research could further explore how brands adapt their brand strategies to The Times and provide an effective brand strategy for the fashion market.



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