

Research on Marketing and Business Operation of Second-tier Luxury Brands and Analysis of Development Limitations

- A Case Study of Issey Miyake

Xinyu Li^{1,a,*}

¹Shanghai Pinghe School, Shanghai, China

a. 3339262730@qq.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This study delves into the marketing and business operations strategy of Issey Miyake, a renowned fashion designer and brand, analyzing their path to success and the challenges faced. Issey Miyake's innovative designs, blending art, technology, and culture, have garnered global recognition. The study examines how his brand balances creativity, innovation, and sustainability while also exploring potential drawbacks. It analyzes Miyake's brand positioning, marketing strategies like limited editions and fashion shows, pricing strategies, and product diversification. Moreover, it scrutinizes Issey Miyake's business expansion into various product lines and retail channels. The study identifies challenges such as maintaining design integrity while pursuing commercial viability, risks of brand extension, diverse market perceptions, and competition. Recommendations include sustainable innovation integration and controlled brand extension to maintain coherence. Ultimately, Issey Miyake's journey showcases the interplay of creativity, innovation, and strategic acumen in the fashion industry.

Keywords: issey miyake, fashion industry, marketing strategy, brand positioning, brand extensions

1. Introduction

The fashion industry, a dynamic and competitive realm, witnesses a continuous influx of designers and brands, but a select few names endure as beacons of enduring influence. Issey Miyake occupies a unique position in this constellation, profoundly shaping the fashion landscape as both a visionary designer and the founder of an eponymous brand. Through his pioneering designs, distinctive creative concepts, and revolutionary departures from convention, Miyake has established himself as a monumental figure in the fashion cosmos. This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Issey Miyake's dual impact as a designer and a brand, delving into the factors behind his achievements and unearthing the challenges he confronted.

Issey Miyake's hallmark lies in his unconventional and avant-garde style that incessantly pushes the boundaries of conventional fashion. His innovative amalgamation of art, technology, and culture has not only propelled him to the vanguard of fashion but has also bequeathed upon the industry a design paradigm that defies norms. With an uncanny ability to weave materials and fabric treatment

techniques into artistic expressions that transcend temporal and spatial confines, Miyake's work epitomizes the convergence of aesthetics and innovation. Furthermore, his incorporation of elements rooted in Japanese culture has garnered him global acclaim, bridging diverse sensibilities with a cohesive design philosophy[1].

Miyake's impact, however, extends beyond his mastery as a designer; he adeptly translated his creative prowess into the establishment of a potent and distinctive brand. This brand not only resonates with consumers but commands industry respect for its unique blend of creativity and sustainability. Yet, amid these triumphs, Miyake grappled with challenges. His distinct design ethos, while a manifestation of his artistic integrity, potentially limited his ability to cater to a broader spectrum of consumer needs. Striking a balance between commercial viability and unwavering creativity, especially while pursuing innovation, posed an ongoing conundrum.

The main objective of this study is to analyze Issey Miyake's marketing and business operation strategies in depth, revealing the elements of its success as well as its potential drawbacks. By exploring how Issey Miyake has achieved such influence and recognition in the field of design and in the business world, as well as the challenges it has encountered along the way, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the fashion industry.

2. Overview of Miyake

2.1. Designer Introduction

Issey Miyake, born on April 22, 1938, in Hiroshima, Japan, is a trailblazing fashion designer renowned for his innovative and avant-garde approach to design. His journey into the world of fashion began at the Tama Art University in Tokyo, where he studied graphic design. This unconventional background later influenced his unique perspective on clothing design.

Miyake's design philosophy transcends traditional boundaries. He challenges the norms of fashion by seamlessly blending art, technology, and functionality. Central to his approach is the concept of "a piece of cloth," where he explores the transformation of two-dimensional materials into three-dimensional forms that beautifully interact with the human body. This philosophy led to the creation of his signature pleats and the "Pleats Please" line, which revolutionized garment construction and aesthetics.[2]

2.2. Brand Background

Issey Miyake's eponymous brand, founded in 1970, is synonymous with groundbreaking design and progressive ideals. From the outset, Miyake aimed to redefine fashion by blending tradition with innovation craftsmanship with technology. His brand has consistently challenged the status quo of fashion, offering a fresh perspective that resonates with individuals seeking unique self-expression.

One of the brand's iconic achievements is the introduction of the "PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE" line in the early 1990s. This collection showcased Miyake's mastery of pleating techniques, resulting in garments that are not only visually captivating but also easy to care for and travel-friendly.

Miyake's influence extends beyond clothing and into the realm of fragrance. The launch of "L'Eau d'Issey," a fragrance inspired by the scent of water, further demonstrated his ability to infuse artistic concepts into various mediums, expanding his brand's reach and impact.[3]

3. Analysis of Issey Miyake's Marketing and Branding Strategy

3.1. Brand Positioning and Brand Values

Issey Miyake's brand positioning revolves around the fusion of art, technology, and nature, resulting in designs that challenge conventions and inspire individuality. The brand's core values emphasize creativity, innovation, and sustainability.[4] This positioning is underscored by a commitment to producing pieces that seamlessly integrate into modern lifestyles while conveying a deeper artistic narrative. By aligning with these values, Issey Miyake cultivates a unique identity that resonates with consumers seeking authenticity and progressive aesthetics.

3.2. Marketing Strategy: Innovative Design, Fashion Show and Limited Edition

The brand consistently delivers unexpected design solutions that capture attention and intrigue. The iconic "Pleats Please" collection, for instance, introduced a novel approach to fabric manipulation that generated buzz and set trends. The brand's participation in prestigious fashion shows not only showcases its designs but also reinforces its creative authority. Moreover, the release of limited-edition pieces and collaborations with other artists or designers fosters exclusivity and drives demand among collectors and fashion enthusiasts.[5]

3.3. Pricing Strategy

Miyake's pricing strategy reflects the brand's premium positioning and the artistry behind each piece. The brand's willingness to explore unconventional techniques and materials often justifies higher price points. Customers are not merely purchasing clothing; they are investing in wearable art that embodies craftsmanship and innovation. [6]This strategy appeals to a niche market that values uniqueness and is willing to pay for the brand's distinctiveness.

3.4. Product Strategy

Issey Miyake's product strategy extends beyond clothing to encompass a holistic lifestyle. The brand offers a diverse range of products, including ready-to-wear garments, fragrances, accessories, and home goods. [7]This diversification caters to different customer preferences and extends the brand's influence across various touchpoints. The emphasis on practicality, functionality, and artistic expression ensures that each product resonates with the brand's overarching philosophy.

4. Analysis of Issey Miyake's Business Operation Strategy

4.1. Product Lines and Business Expansion

Issey Miyake's business operation strategy is characterized by its diversification across multiple product lines and innovative business expansions. [8]Beyond clothing, the brand has ventured into home furnishing, catering to different aspects of customers' lives. This strategic expansion not only broadens the brand's offerings but also strengthens its presence in various markets. The introduction of home goods and interior designs reflects the brand's commitment to infusing artistic and functional elements into everyday living, creating a comprehensive brand experience.

4.2. Retail Channels

Issey Miyake strategically employs diverse retail channels to enhance its accessibility and reach. The brand operates its own flagship stores, which provide a controlled environment to showcase the brand's complete vision and offer a unique shopping experience. Cooperative stores and

collaborations with select retail partners extend the brand's influence on broader audiences. Additionally, the brand's presence on e-commerce platforms aligns with changing consumer behaviors, allowing customers to engage with the brand conveniently and globally. [9]

4.3. Brand Value Delivery and Customer Experience Construction

Issey Miyake's commitment to delivering brand value and constructing an exceptional customer experience is evident in its attention to detail and holistic approach. The brand's products are not merely commodities but vehicles for storytelling, creativity, and emotion. This narrative is woven into each piece, fostering a deeper connection between the brand and its customers. The brand's emphasis on sustainability, innovation, and artistry resonates with conscious consumers seeking meaningful engagements. Its business operation strategy successfully combines innovation with diversification, allowing the brand to cater to different facets of consumers' lives while maintaining a consistent brand identity. The expansion into home furnishing and other areas showcases the brand's adaptability and ambition to create a holistic lifestyle brand.

5. Issey Miyake's Development Disadvantages and Challenges

5.1. The Balance Between Over-commercialization of Brands and Design Concepts

As Issey Miyake gains popularity and global recognition, the challenge of maintaining a delicate equilibrium between commercial viability and upholding the brand's distinctive design philosophy becomes paramount. The allure of catering to broader markets and increasing sales can inadvertently lead to a compromise in the brand's artistic integrity. The risk of over-commercialization looms, where designs might become standardized to suit mass-market preferences, eroding the brand's reputation as a pioneer of design innovation. Striking the right balance between profit-oriented strategies and preserving the brand's visionary essence is a perpetual challenge.

5.2. Risks and Implications of Brand Extension

Issey Miyake's expansion into diverse product categories, such as home furnishing and catering, introduces both opportunities and potential risks. While brand extension allows for growth and diversification, it also carries the risk of diluting the brand's core identity. Extending the brand into unrelated domains can confuse consumers and weaken its distinctiveness. Straying too far from the original design philosophy could result in brand diffusion, leading to difficulties in communicating a coherent brand message. Maintaining the integrity of the brand while pursuing expansion requires meticulous planning and a thorough understanding of consumer expectations.

5.3. Potential Brand Perception and Expansion Pressures

As Issey Miyake seeks to expand its reach across different markets and cultures, it faces the challenge of managing varying consumer perceptions and cultural dynamics. Adapting the brand's message to resonate with diverse audiences without compromising its core values can be complex. The pressure to continuously innovate and remain ahead of industry trends might inadvertently lead to rushed decisions or the abandonment of the brand's unique identity. Striking a balance between catering to local preferences while upholding the global brand's consistency is an intricate challenge that necessitates a nuanced approach.

5.4. Other Issues

Beyond the aforementioned challenges, Issey Miyake must navigate a plethora of additional complexities. Maintaining its commitment to sustainability amidst evolving environmental standards requires ongoing effort and adaptation. Sustaining a loyal customer base in the face of evolving consumer preferences and intensifying competition necessitates continuous creativity and strategic marketing. Moreover, addressing competition from emerging designers and brands that might attempt to replicate or dilute Issey Miyake's distinctive market position requires vigilance and strategic differentiation.

6. Development Prospects and Recommendations

6.1. Recommendation 1--Sustainable Innovation Integration

Issey Miyake's commitment to sustainability and innovation is commendable, but there's room to further integrate these aspects into the brand's core strategies. First, use the Green Materials Research. Invest in researching and utilizing sustainable materials that align with the brand's aesthetic and values. Developing and showcasing innovative eco-friendly materials could set Issey Miyake apart as a pioneer in both design and sustainability. In addition, embrace a cradle-to-cradle design approach where products are created with the intention of being fully recyclable or up cyclable. This approach could help reduce the brand's environmental impact and appeal to conscious consumers.

6.2. Recommendation 2--Controlled Brand Extension

As Issey Miyake expands into new product categories, maintaining a cohesive brand identity becomes critical.[10] To ensure successful brand extension without diluting the core essence, the brand could implement the following strategies. First of all, Storytelling Continuity. Develop a narrative that seamlessly connects the new product categories to the brand's existing story. Whether through design inspiration, materials, or philosophy, ensure that each extension maintains the brand's narrative thread. What's more, the Limited-Edition Approach is also important to the company. Forays into new categories could begin with limited edition releases. This approach generates anticipation, allows for experimentation, and minimizes the risk of dilution. It also aligns with the brand's history of offering exclusivity.

7. Conclusion

In the ever-evolving realm of fashion and design, Issey Miyake stands as a visionary and a trailblazer who has indelibly shaped the industry. From his innovative approach to design that challenges traditional norms to his establishment of a brand that resonates with authenticity and sustainability, Issey Miyake's journey reflects both triumphs and challenges that illuminate the intricacies of the fashion landscape.

In conclusion, Issey Miyake's journey through the fashion landscape exemplifies the intersection of creativity, innovation, and strategic acumen. His ability to infuse artistry into every facet of design, while pioneering sustainable practices, sets a standard for the industry. However, the challenges faced underscore the complexities of maintaining artistic integrity in a commercial world. As Issey Miyake's brand continues to evolve, it is a testament to the enduring pursuit of pushing boundaries, inspiring individuality, and creating a holistic lifestyle experience that bridges the realms of fashion, art, and innovation.

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