

Marketing Strategies of Yingkou Rice Producers: Basis for Strategic Plan

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Abstract. The study focused on examining the marketing strategies of Yingkou rice producers, particularly emphasizing the 4Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. Challenges affecting both production and marketing were identified, prompting the need for strategic interventions. Findings highlighted the necessity for quality control to ensure the delivery of high-quality and healthy rice to consumers. Additionally, monitoring costs and sales was deemed essential to maintain profitability. Recommendations were made to encourage farmers to adopt Yingkou rice, promoting its quality and profitability. Furthermore, expanding distribution channels, including supermarkets and online platforms, was suggested to broaden market reach. The challenges faced by Yingkou rice farmers, such as pest infestations and climate change affecting quality, were acknowledged. Changes in price due to governmental policies and market demand were also noted. Accessibility to larger markets emerged as a significant hurdle, underscoring the need for strategic promotion efforts. Proposals included intensive promotional campaigns to raise awareness about the promising qualities of Yingkou rice and its potential profitability for farmers. In response to these findings, the study developed a proposed marketing plan aimed at enhancing the marketing strategies for Yingkou rice producers. This plan entails implementing stringent quality control measures throughout the production process to ensure consistent high quality. Pricing strategies may involve careful monitoring of market trends and production costs to maintain competitiveness and profitability. Expanding market reach may be facilitated through collaborations with agricultural authorities and the establishment of new distribution channels. Intensive promotional campaigns leveraging various marketing channels may be conducted to increase consumer awareness and drive demand for Yingkou rice.

Keywords: 4Ps; Marketing Plan; Place and Promotion; Price; Product; Yingkou Rice

1. Introduction

The retail industry in China has experienced significant growth and development in recent years, marked by improved scale, operational capabilities, and market presence. However, despite these advancements, there exist notable gaps and challenges within the sector, such as low industrial concentration, small enterprise scale, and outdated marketing concepts (Han et al., 2021). This has created an urgent need for retail enterprises to adopt advanced marketing strategies and business methods to enhance their competitiveness in the market. With China's market economy continuously evolving and intensifying competition among retail players, there is a clear research gap regarding the adoption of modern marketing concepts and strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced by Chinese retail enterprises. Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate and develop new marketing strategies that align with the evolving market dynamics and enhance the overall competitiveness of retail enterprises in China (Hua, 2018).

In response to the changing market landscape and the emergence of the new retail era, it is imperative for retail industry players to rethink their marketing development models. Traditional marketing methods centered solely on brand promotion have become insufficient in meeting the diverse needs of today's consumers and addressing the complexities of the retail environment. The study focused on exploring the effects of marketing strategies on retail enterprises, particularly in the context of integrating offline and online marketing methods. By examining the relationship between marketing strategies and their impacts on retail enterprises, the research aims to provide valuable insights into optimizing marketing approaches, enhancing operational efficiency, and achieving long-term sustainable growth in the retail sector.

2. Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive research method. A descriptive research design involves collecting data on a specific subject but does not attempt to infer causation (Busayo, 2023). This study specifically studied the marketing strategies of Yingkou rice producers and proposed a strategic plan as the result of this study.

2.1. Sampling Procedure

The study employed stratified random sampling to identify requirements. According to Gao (2017), stratified random sampling is a sampling technique that divides a population into smaller subgroups known as strata. The strata in stratified random sampling, or stratification, were formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics, such as income or educational attainment.

2.2. Respondents

The respondents of this study were rice producers in Yingkou City. They possessed all the knowledge about Yingkou rice and had extensive experience in Yingkou rice production for many years. This captured the interest of the researcher to make them the respondents in this study. There were more than 300 Yingkou rice producers in Yingkou City, and 124 of them served as the respondents. The researcher used Slovin's formula with a 7% margin of error to determine the sample size required for this study.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents

Farm Location	Population	%	Sample
Zhan Qian District	30	9.52	12
Lao Bian District	61	19.37	24
Xi Shi District	35	11.11	14
Da Shiqiao	95	30.16	37
Ba Yuquan	42	13.33	17
Gai Zou	52	16.51	20
Total	315	100.00	124

2.2.1 Research Site

The study was conducted in Guangdong Province, China since this province is the representative province in China and it has a developed economy, especially in the cities of Dongguan, Foshan, Zhongshan, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and other cities in the province. At the same time, the researcher herself works in Dongguan City, and it is convenient to collect the data needed in this study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Yingkou Rice Producers

The survey data revealed several key demographics and characteristics of rice farmers in the study area. The majority of farmers surveyed were in the 51–60 age group, comprising 34.68% of respondents, followed by those aged 31–40 and 41–50. Male farmers dominated the sample, accounting for 86.29% of respondents, while female farmers constituted a smaller proportion of 13.71%. In terms of experience, farmers with 5–10 years and 11–15 years were the most common categories, representing 46.78% and 33.06%, respectively. The size of farmland varied, with most farmers having 4–5 hectares of land (48.39%), followed by 2–3 hectares (33.87%). Regarding yield per harvest, the majority fell in the 151–200 sacks category (50%), and in terms of income per season, the most common range was 20,001–30,000 RMB (45.97%). Traders were the primary customers for rice producers, comprising 65.32% of respondents, followed by retail store owners and others. Overall, these insights provide a comprehensive view of the demographics, farming experience, land size, production, income levels, and customer base among rice farmers in the surveyed area.

3.2 Marketing Strategies

The following were the marketing strategies focusing on the 4Ps of marketing that includes product, price, place and promotion.

3.2.1 Product

Table 2 Product

No	Item Statement	WM	VD
1	Yingkou Rice is nutritious compared to other rice. It contains vitamins and minerals that are good for the health of consumers.	3.14	Agree
2	Yingkou rice is high-quality rice in terms of texture and taste.	3.4	Strongly Agree
3	Yingkou Rice undertakes strict quality control to ensure that each bag of rice meets standard.	3.2	Agree
4	Yingkou rice is well packaged.	3.12	Agree
5	Yingkou rice can be used not for meals but as raw material/ingredients to create other products.	3.67	Strongly Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.31	Strongly Agree

***Legend: Strongly Agree– 3.26 to 4.00; Agree– 2.52 to 3.25; Disagree– 1.76 to 2.50; Strongly Disagree– 1.00 to 1.75

The high weighted average score of 3.67 indicates strong agreement among rice producers regarding rice's versatility, while the acknowledgment of Yingkou rice's high quality in terms of texture and taste, with a score of 3.4, contributes significantly to its marketability and reputation among consumers. The emphasis on strict quality control measures, nutritional value, and well-packaged presentation further enhances Yingkou rice's appeal and competitive strength in the rice market (Bo, 2021).

3.2.2 Price

Table 3 Price

No	Item Statement	WM	VD
1	The price of Yingkou rice is affordable and competitive in the market.	3.27	Strongly Agree
2	The price of Yingkou rice covers all costs to ensure profitability.	3.21	Agree
3	The price of Yingkou rice ensure profit from its sales	3.22	Agree
4	The price of Yingkou rice is worth paying for compare to other variety of rice offered by competitors	3.12	Agree
5	The price of Yingkou rice is based on the cost of production and the acquisition price of traders	3.02	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.17	Agree

****Legend: Strongly Agree- 3.26 to 4.00; Agree- 2.52 to 3.25; Disagree- 1.76 to 2.50; Strongly Disagree- 1.00 to 1.75*

The analysis of the Price component within the 4P marketing strategy yielded a weighted average of 3.17, indicating a strong consensus among rice producers regarding Yingkou rice's pricing. This consensus reflects the perceived affordability, competitiveness, and profitability of Yingkou rice's pricing strategy, contributing to its widespread acceptance and popularity in the market. Overall, the pricing strategy of Yingkou rice is viewed positively, aligning with market expectations and ensuring sustainable growth for producers (Miao, 2021).

3.2.3 Place

The analysis of the place component within the 4P marketing strategy yielded a weighted average of 3.17, indicating a positive consensus among rice producers regarding the distribution channels and accessibility of Yingkou rice.

Table 4 Place

No	Item Statement	WM	VD
1	Yingkou rice is available in all market places.	3.2	Agree
2	Yingkou rice has distributors.	3.33	Strongly Agree
3	Yingkou rice is accessible to consumers.	3.06	Agree
4	Yingkou rice is well-known in all areas like the city, province and regions.	3.21	Agree
5	Yingkou rice is planted anywhere in China.	3.06	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.17	Agree

****Legend: Strongly Agree- 3.26 to 4.00; Agree- 2.52 to 3.25; Disagree- 1.76 to 2.50; Strongly Disagree- 1.00 to 1.75*

This consensus reflects the well-established and efficient sales channels, including the strong focus on nurturing distributors to expand the distribution network for Yingkou rice. Overall, the strategic emphasis on distribution and accessibility has contributed significantly to the brand's recognition, market presence, and consumer preference for Yingkou rice (Ming, 2017).

3.2.4 Promotion

Table 5 Promotion

No	Item Statement	WM	VD
1	Yingkou rice well known to be unique in terms of characteristics and quality.	3.27	Strongly Agree
2	Yingkou rice is promoted using social media such as Weibo, WeChat, and other online platforms. Post food pictures, cooking videos, and user testimonials to engage with potential customers.	3.34	Strongly Agree
3	Yingkou rice provides convenience through online purchasing options for consumer accessibility.	3.13	Agree
4	Promotional activities were done such as free tasting events are held at supermarkets, food fairs, and farmers' markets to allow people to try.	3.2	Agree
5	Yingkou rice is promoted in the local areas such as within the city.	3.25	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.24	Agree

****Legend: Strongly Agree- 3.26 to 4.00; Agree- 2.52 to 3.25; Disagree- 1.76 to 2.50; Strongly Disagree- 1.00 to 1.75*

The analysis of the Promotion component within the 4P marketing strategy indicates a strong endorsement from rice producers for various effective online promotion methods for Yingkou rice, such as social media engagement and live streaming, resulting in a high weighted average score of 3.34. This reflects the success of utilizing platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and other online platforms to enhance engagement with potential consumers and make the sales of Yingkou rice more efficient. Additionally, effective local promotion efforts and activities such as free tastings at supermarkets and food fairs have further bolstered the recognition, reputation, and influence of Yingkou rice among consumers, contributing to its market success.

3.3 Challenges or Difficulties Encountered by the Farmers

3.3.1 Products

The analysis of challenges related to rice production in Yingkou reveals that while issues such as pests, diseases, and calamities do occur occasionally, they are considered rare according to the weighted average score of 2.33, reflecting a "Rarely" sentiment among producers. However, concerns persist regarding the reluctance of farmers to adopt modern techniques, leading to challenges like resistance to chemicals and increased pesticide use over time. Overall, Yingkou's reputation as a high-quality rice production base remains intact due to favorable geographical conditions and the manageable nature of quality-related issues, as indicated by the weighted average score of 2.16.

3.3.2 Price

The analysis of challenges related to pricing for Yingkou rice indicates that while occasional affordability issues and government policy influences are encountered, they are considered rare among rice producers. High input costs relative to earnings from sales and occasional price fluctuations due to market dynamics contribute to the complexities faced by rice producers in setting competitive prices and ensuring profitability.

3.3.3 Place

The analysis indicates that while rice producers have occasionally faced challenges such as market accessibility, saturation, and logistics issues, these situations are infrequent and manageable. Despite occasional hurdles like limited market supply or competitive environments, overall, the sales channels for

Yingkou rice are perceived as relatively smooth by producers, with rare disruptions that can be addressed effectively.

3.3.4 Promotion

The analysis reveals that while there is a general acknowledgment of the need to strengthen promotional activities and programs for Yingkou rice, particularly online and offline, challenges related to consumer awareness and budget constraints are relatively rare. The establishment of the Yingkou Rice Association has played a pivotal role in promoting the Yingkou rice brand, resulting in notable achievements and recognitions, highlighting the importance of brand marketing in the industry.

3.4 Proposed Strategic Plan

Based on the findings of the study, a proposed marketing plan was made. The significance of marketing strategies for Yingkou rice lies in enhancing its market presence, reputation, and accessibility. This involves promoting its high-quality attributes, affordability, and versatility, alongside ensuring competitive pricing and stable market conditions with governmental support.

4. Conclusions

Most of the Yingkou rice producers are experienced middle-aged male farmers with sizable farmland and consistent yields, although they face challenges such as pests and diseases impacting their harvest. The marketing strategies for Yingkou rice emphasize its high quality, competitive pricing, and accessibility through distributors, with potential for further promotion on social media platforms. To address challenges and enhance market reach, a strategic marketing plan focusing on product quality, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and effective promotion is essential for sustaining and growing Yingkou rice production in China.

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