

# Research About Apple's Marketing Strategy and Consumer Behavior

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**Abstract.** This paper mainly tells how Apple is successful, including how to attract new customers, how to retain old customers, and so on. The reason for choosing this topic for research is to analyze Apple's success and its perfect marketing strategy with the marketing analysis method of Jonah Burger. This paper will use a Questionnaire, Modal analyses, and Data collection to obtain evidence. In the Result section, this paper will use three factors from Jonah Burger's STEPPS: Social Currency, Practical value, and Emotion, to describe Apple's success. Meanwhile, professional market analysis frameworks such as SWOT analysis and Further suggestions and Strategies will be used in the Discussion to analyze the current situation and future of apple's market. This article will give readers a better understanding of Apple's success and can be used as a reference.

**Keywords:** Apple, Consumer behavior, Marketing strategy.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research background

On April 1, 1976, Apple Computer was founded by college dropouts Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, who brought a vision to the new company that would change the way people looked at computers. Jobs and Wozniak wanted to make computers small enough that people could use them in their homes or offices. Simply put, they want a user-friendly computer. As their ambitions grew and the market became crowded, they began to develop a broader range of products, such as mobile phones, watches, headphones, and iPad, rather than just computers. The electronics market has always been very competitive, Compaq Computer, Dell Computer, INTERNATIONAL Business Machines, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard. In such a competitive market, Apple's launch of the iPod in 2003 dramatically changed the shape of the market. Between 2001 and 2005, the company's sales almost tripled, from \$5.3 billion to \$13.9 billion, largely thanks to the popularity of the iPod. Apple has become the most famous electronics brand globally because of its innovative thinking and unconventional ideas [1-2].

### 1.2 Literature review

Daylin Van De Vilert found that: apple can use knowledge of consumer behavior to fill the gap in the market and identify products that will fulfill consumers' needs. The consumer purchasing decision process comprises five steps: 1. problem recognition 2. information search 3. evaluation of alternatives 4. Purchase decision 5. Post-purchase behavior. Problem recognition is the perception of a need in the eyes of consumers. Information search is where apple's colossal brand name helps their marketing. Evaluating alternatives is consumers' assessment of the value of each brand they would consider. The purchase decision is deciding when to buy and whom to buy from. Ultimately, consumers compare the product they purchased to their expectations, also known as consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product. And the consumer purchasing process may be influenced by the marketing mix—the article focusses on psychological influences. The article points

out that factors influencing consumer buying behavior include motivation, personality, perception, learning, values, beliefs, attitude, and lifestyle [3].

Clayton analyzes the psychosocial role of the smartphone. Attachment to one's cell phone may result from the phone's capacity to provide information access, social interaction, and personal safety (Aoki & Downes 2003). One alternative explanation as to why people may become attached to their iPhone is the component of fear of missing out (FoMO), which is operationally defined as the fears, worries, and anxieties people may have about being out of touch with the events, experiences. The conversation is happening across their extended social circles.[4]

Banani Dhaka Bangladesh studies the object's relationship with the iPhone on the consumer. The study has pointed out that the iPhone's various meanings and uses possessors attach to their possessions. The meanings derived from the consumption of the iPhone are public meanings people have connected to the products via advertisements and word of mouth. However, the general definitions are taken a step further by possessors after they have had encounters with their iPhones and then converted to a personal purpose. Private intentions are spurred due to experience with and use of the phone over time. The study found that the source of these meanings is the pleasure derived from the utility and appearance of the iPhone. During the research, it was also found that the purpose of consumption by individuals was essential because of the need to create a social image or self-enhancement, which also supports Tian and McKenzie's (2001) submissions on the purpose of acquiring possessions [4].

Jonah Berger presented a modal called STEPPS, which is based on the characteristic of separation regarding word of mouth. The first letter, S, "social currency," means the resource of value that makes consumers seem to have status, wealth, or unique character in society, increasing their sense of social identity. The second letter, T "trigger," means the connection between the exterior effect and the motivation of the consumer to purchase the product. The third letter, E, "emotion," indicates that consumers' emotional resonance causes them to recall the goods. The fourth letter, P "public," means brand exposure with the product, lead the Sheep-Flock effect. The fifth letter, P "practical value," is related to the psychological effect discounts or memberships cause consumers by influencing their purchasing behavior, for example, the Decoy effect, Reciprocity, and Compromise Effect. The sixth letter, S "story," is stories of positive feedback by consumers to influence word of mouth [5].

### 1.3 Research gap

Most research was conducted using fundamental mainstream model analysis, including SWOT, PEST, 4P, and 4C. These modalities examined a company's capability or issue from various perspectives, including the economic environment's characteristics, market orientation, audience and media, and advantages and disadvantages. Aithal outlines seventeen frameworks and explains which modalities each focuses on [6].

Russell B. Clayton concentrated on the physiological and mental health consequences. As Clayton said, people are hooked to or rely on electronic devices out of fear of being disconnected from society. Individuals are eager to discover their identity and social position in the virtual world, as demonstrated by the STEPPS modal, including social currency [4-5]. Md Afnan chooses to do a case study, identifying individuals who use iPhones consistently and recording each individual's response to the question "why do you prefer iPhone." Xian mentions marketing strategy, including hunger marking and promotion [7].

However, some research was out of date; due to the quick advancement of technology, HUAWEI, Samsung, Xiaomi, OPPO, and Vivo have significantly updated their devices, which can now perform the functions of Apple. Apple started switching its strategy in recent years. This paper will use the STEPPS modal to research the making strategy and determine what Apple changed.

### 1.4 Research framework

This study will analyze the significance and human behavior associated with numerous electronic devices in contemporary society. It also emphasizes the advertisement mode combining STEPPS and

STP to realize the basic positioning and psychology of user expression through the combination of electronic devices.

Secondly, this essay will discuss the marketing strategy, including the advertisement, tagline, and production.

Thirdly, this article will discuss the characteristics and qualities of Apple Inc., utilizing the SWOT analysis techniques, before making additional recommendations.

## 2. Methodology

To get information about Apple's consumer behavior and market strategy, we can utilize SWOT to find out basic orientation and strategy analyses for Apple. Then use STP (and STEPPS modal to construct a short interview, including some fixed questions about the experience of using an iPhone or iPad. The sample is selected by volunteering, and the volunteer needs to be an Apple product user. The examples will be separated into different groups. The various groups may depend on the apple products participants own, the year of apple products they used, the different ages, and the different products purchased (price, other devices all involved). The interview has open questions, and it can give clear and intense feedback from participants, thus making it convenient to use and study.

Modal analyses: Cite the previous study on different models, and create various fundamental modalities to analyze strategy and further suggestions.

Questionnaire: the questionnaire is more available and can obtain qualitative data in bulk; even if some of the questionnaires don't have validity, they are delivered to a randomly selected sample, making it easier to gain information. Focus on customer happiness via after-sales and pre-sales services and advertisement memories level.

Data collection: reference to other articles and searching on the internet is also a suitable method to gain valuable data, especially that belonging to secondary data discovered by a publisher or experiment designer.

## 3. Result

This paper uses three factors of the STEPPS modal to analyze the marketing strategy and the reason for Apple's success from different perspectives.

### 3.1 STEPPS

#### 3.1.2 Social currency

Social currency is a characteristic of consumers that encourages them to share with or be shared by others, to analyze word of mouth separation.

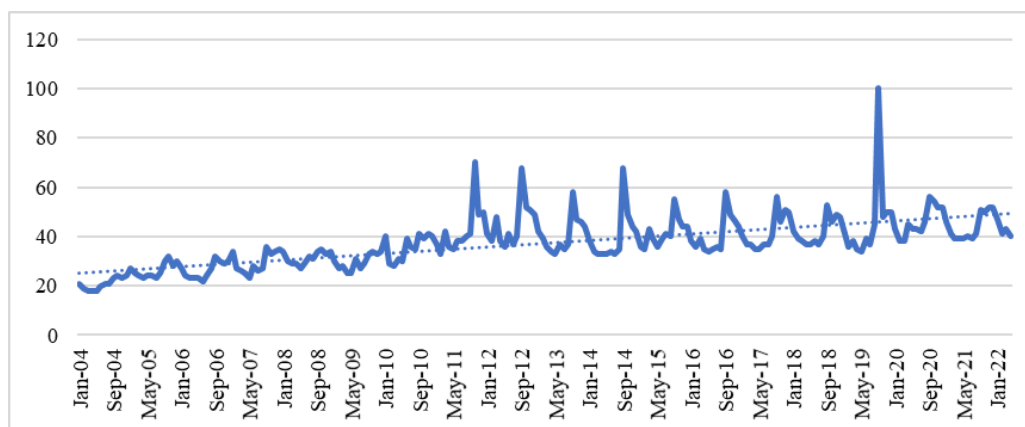
The main philosophy of Apple's production design is minimalism and functionalism; the packaging of concise advertising slogans is also key to Apple's success, compared with the motto of different brands. For example, iPhone.

**Table 1.** Apple’s production

Release Date	iPhone marketing	
	Advertise word	Format
2009 June 9	“The fastest iPhone ever.”	(iPhone 3Gs)
2010 June 8	“This changes everything, Again.”	(iPhone 4)
2012 September 13	“So much more than before, And so much less.”	(iPhone 5)
2014 Sep 10	“Bigger than bigger.”	(iPhone 6)
2016 Sep 8	“This is 7.”	(iPhone 7)
2017 Sep 13	“Say hello to the future”	(iPhone X)
2018 Sep 13	“Welcome to the big screens.”	(iPhone Xr, Xs)
2019 September 11	“Pro cameras. Pro display. Pro performance.”	(iPhone 11 pro)
2020 April 24	“Lots to love, Less to spend.”	(iPhone SE 2)
2020 Oct 14	“It’s a leap year.”	(iPhone 12 Pro)
2021 Sep 16	“Oh, So, Pro”	(iPhone 13 Pro)
2022 Apr 3	“Love the power, Love the price.”	(iPhone SE 3)

Since the iPhone 3Gs, Apple has always expressed its products through short sentences and posters. Apple sparked a minimalist frenzy, quickly emulated by a slew of manufacturers. Numerous clients are attracted to the aesthetics and ergonomics of the design. Apple's market share increased as the brand gained popularity, reaching 23.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2021 [8], and the brand's popularity increased according to the data collection resulting in the purchase of Apple devices progressively

It was becoming a social currency. According to the Bandwagon Effect [9], when the customers' immediate environment is dominated by users of the same brand or format, the consumer will seek out or speak with others [9], find common topics with others, and be able to take the opportunity to make friends or create relationships with them. This is the social currency in this case. Some flagship products will also create social currency because of product positioning for different series.



**Figure 1.** The popularity of Apple Inc.

Data from google trend: <https://trends.google.com>

(1) STP analysis [14][19][24]

(2) Segmenting

These two tables (table 2 and table 3) show the various market orientations of each production. Some products necessitate more economic strength and purchasing power. The consumer who buys upper-class products receives social currency from production; they are eager to share their pricey or superior equipment to exhibit social identity and status on social media or self-media, producing word of mouth during share.

**Table 2.** Classification of Production

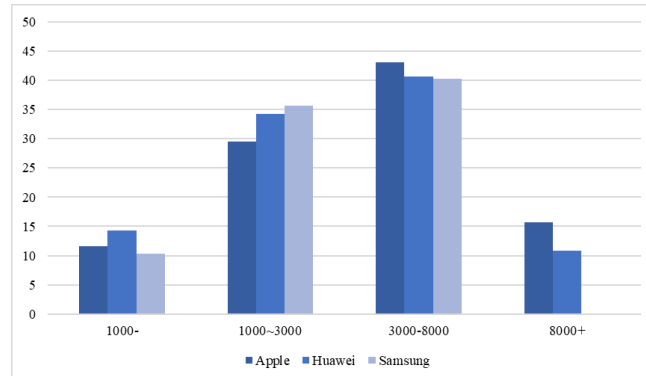
Class	iPad	MacBook	
Lower class	Normal		Given the audience want a portable and cheap tablet.
Middle class	Mini		Given the audience require an average ability and side tablet.
	Air	Air	Given the audience's requirements, a large-screen but portable tablet is needed.
Upper class	Pro	Pro	Given the audience needs a powerful and professional device for work.

**Table 3.** Classification of Production

Class	iPhone	
Lower class	SE	Given the limited budget or income audience who wishes to acquire a low-cost mobile phone.
Middle class	Previous version	Given the audience participation at a reduced price following the publication of the most recent production.
	Normal	Given that the audience wants the latest format at an affordable price.
Upper class	Pro	Given the audience's need for professional hardware and blockbuster capabilities in a smartphone.
	Pro Max	

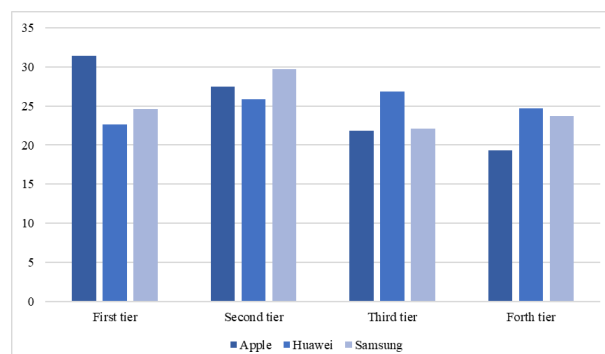
(3) Targeting and Positioning

According to the previous classification, Apple has three major types of targeting consumers [10].

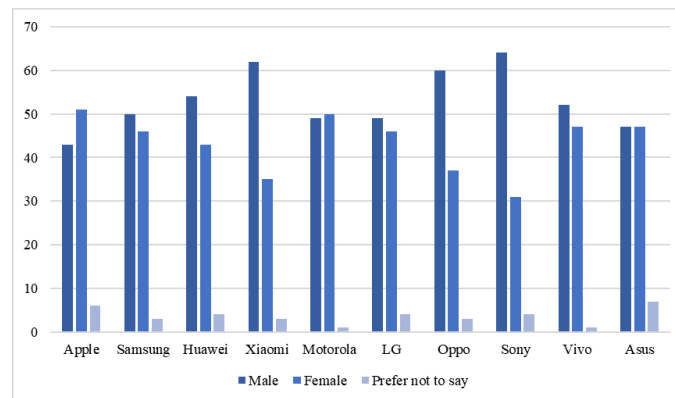


**Figure 2.** Income distribution compared with a different brand (%)

Officially, because the price of Apple products is larger than the usual market price, Apple consumers are generally high-income persons, which is why most retail stores are opened in more developed areas [10].



**Figure 3.** City distribution compared with a different brand (%)



**Figure 4.** Smartphone user gender distribution by manufacturer 2019 (%)

Consequently, most of the target audience is customers and consumers with certain economic strengths. According to the data, there are more female Apple users than male Apple users, but men and a minority of women dominate most other brands [10-11].

### 3.1.3 Practical value

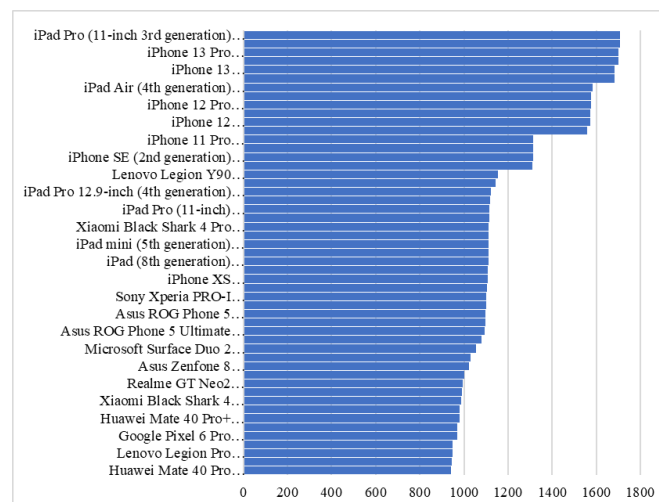
Consumers are willing to acquire and share if an event or performance can make them experience some practical benefit.

#### 1. Huger marketing

Huger marketing is based on enough storage and restrictions of supply; “Hunger marketing strategies are good for keeping their product prices stability and control over product upgrades” [7]; this induces the consumer to have a deceptive illusion: “the production is valued.” Hunger marketing convinces the buyer that these things have practical worth and that purchasing them is beneficial. Additionally, according to social currency theory, consumers willing to share something are rare and precious. Following extensive advertising, all new Apple’s latest production is introduced simultaneously to capture consumers' attention, pique people's interest, and keep the brand stream [7] [12].

#### 2. Advanced technology

The top performance of the processor of Apple’s device is the other reason that attracts consumers. Apple’s device occupies the top 16. For consumers, better performance determines a better user experience, and buying a better brand will give consumers absolute value, including better system feedback and processing instructions. This is another factor in the success of Apple. [13].

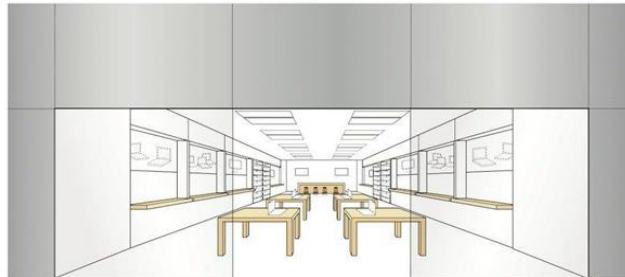


**Figure 5.** CPU score ranking (Mobile)

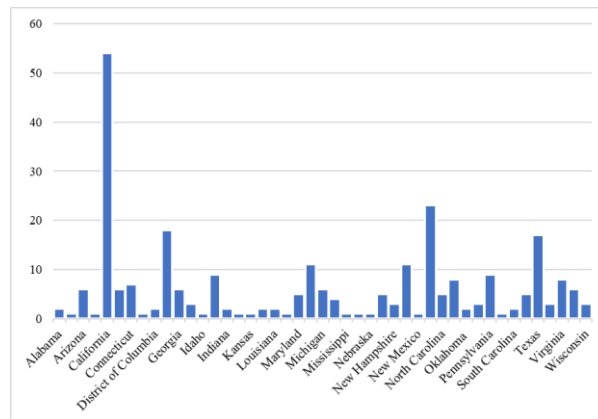
### 3.1.4 Emotion

#### 1. Experiential Marketing

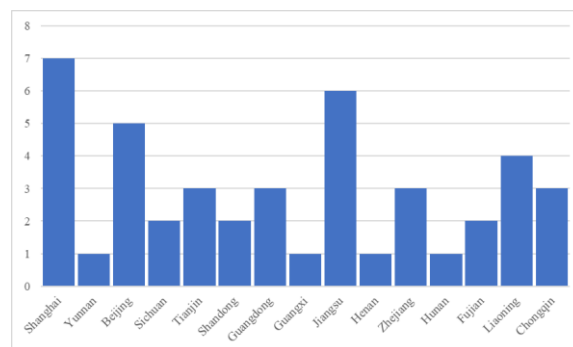
Experiential marketing is centered on activating consumers' vision, auditory, tactile, and participation to stimulate emotion and sensation. Apple's experience store is often located in the city's center, with stringent architectural design, decoration, and layout requirements [15].



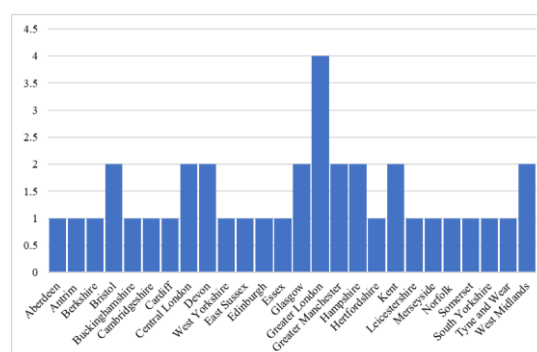
**Figure 6.** Apple's experience store blueprint.



**Figure 7.** Retail store distribution in the United States [16]



**Figure 8.** Retail store distribution in China (Mainland) [16]

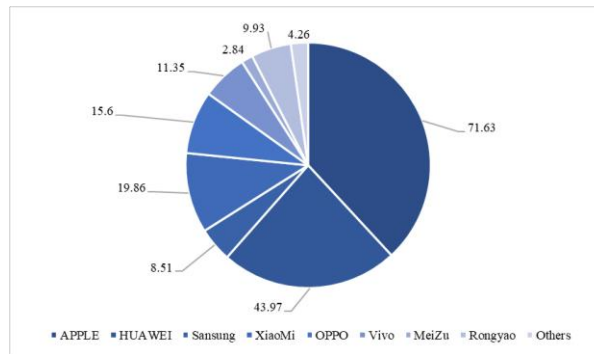


**Figure 9.** Retail store distribution in the United Kingdom [16]

There are almost rigorous standards in terms of placement and so on. Except for the unique flagship store, most of Apple’s retail outlets followed this blueprint design in all department stores. Gigantic transparent tempered glass and significant logo. Recognizable and straightforward glasses and a wooden table were given the consumer a unique impression of Apple.

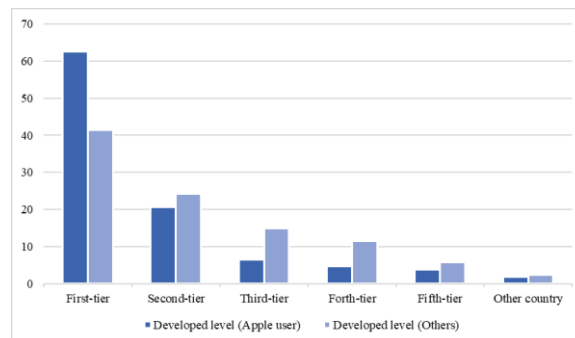
**3.2 Data collection**

We collect 141 random samples by questionnaire in China on the website and social media.



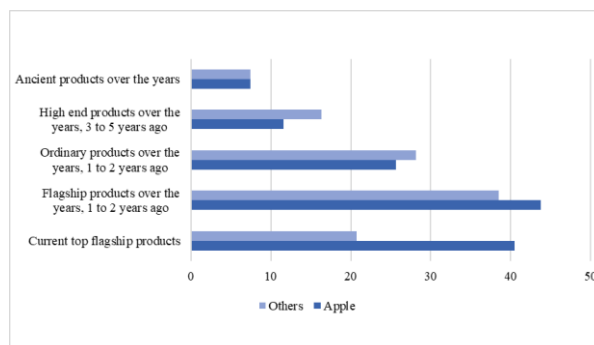
**Figure 10.** Sample distribution (%)

The majority of them are Apple users, and there are 61.62% of them came from developed first-tier urban.



**Figure 11.** The country developed level of a different brand (%)

It is not difficult to establish that most consumers will prefer to utilize Apple for regions with high development levels in these data because most retail locations are opened in economically developed areas. Witch proved by previous consequence in STP modal.



**Figure 12.** Comparison with the trend of the brand (%)

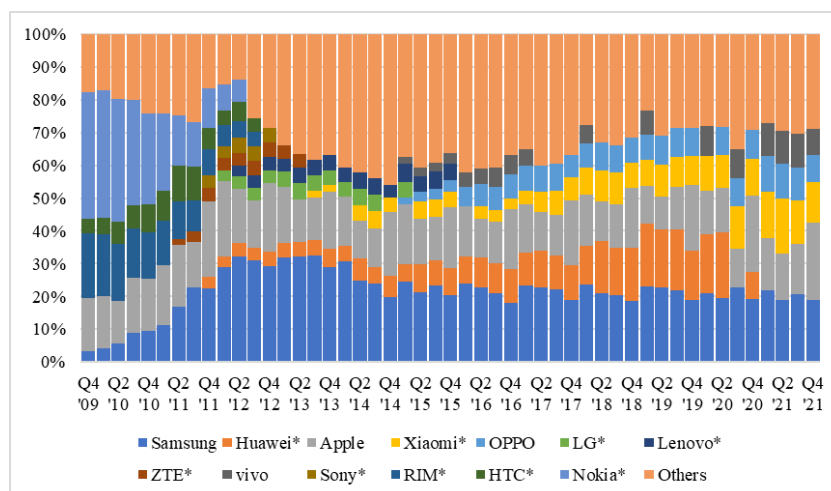
Given that most of the samples come from locations with higher living standards, it's unsurprising that most consumers prefer more excellent pricing or higher performance. The main distinction is that Apple users are more ready to purchase current top flagship products than others.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 SWOT [7] [12] [17]

**Table 4.** SWOT analysis

<p><b>Strengths</b>                  Strong advertising and marketing capabilities promote a powerful brand.                  Famous and lengthy history.                  Brand recognition and reputation.                  Rapid invention approaches that are effective                  Advanced technology and chips.                  An advanced, and dependable operating system.                  Strong brand loyalty.                  Mature supply chain.                  Various product lines.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b>                  The average cost is relatively expensive in comparison to other industries.                  iOS and macOS systems are restricted during data transformation and resource download.                  For instance, most buyers note that radiators and batteries may be improved compared to other brands for some hardware items with contentious qualities.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>                  With the rapid advancement of the electronic commerce platform, as well as self-media and social media applications, lead customers are unable to leave without mobile devices.                  Create an extended unique social media application, similar to Discord, Telegram, and Facebook, targeting cooperation with other popular platforms.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b>                  There are many alternatives to "Apple" in the same business, and an expanding number of newborn brands have arisen on the market in recent years.                  Apple's market share, sales, and earnings are under pressure as the competition heats up.                  Android is an Open-Source operating system with multiple degrees of freedom compared to the iOS system's restrictions.</p>



**Figure 13.** Global smartphone market share from 4th quarter 2009 to 4th quarter 2021 [18]

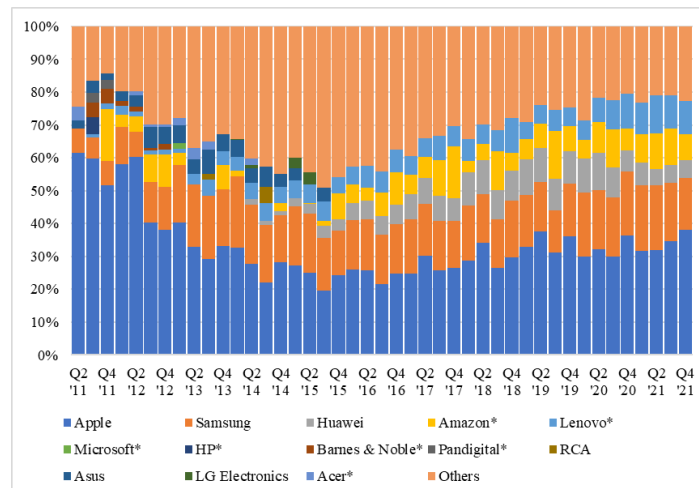


Figure 14. Global tablet market share from 2th quarter 2011 to 4th quarter 2021 [20]

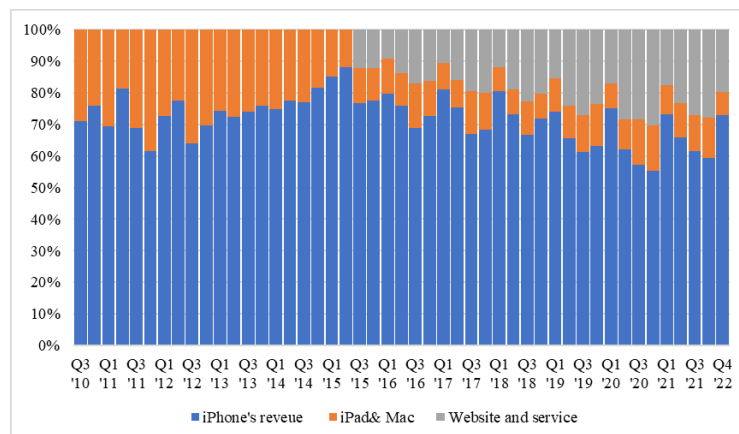


Figure 15. Products revenue share of total revenue (%) [21][22][23]

Throughout the smartphone market, most of Apple's revenue depends on the sales of the iPhone. From 2010 to 2022, the market revenue of the iPhone is increasing, while the market revenue for the iPad is decreasing. A part of the brand faded after 2013, including Nokia and Sony. More and more competitors are trying to participate in the market, including Xiaomi and OPPO. Xiaomi increased from 2.1% to 12.4% market share between the third quarter of 2013 and the fourth quarter of 2021. OPPO rose from 2.2% to 8.3% market share between the first quarter of 2015 and the fourth quarter of 2021. Samsung experienced its Gooden era from 2012 to 2014, reaching 32.5% market share in the third quarter of 2013, but started to decrease after. The weakness of Apple is the iPad and MacBook, especially the iPad; the share of the market and revenues experienced a slight decline with an extended period fluctuating for previous years. Apple is over-dependent on the income of smartphones, over.

#### 4.2 Interview

By the restriction of the epidemic, this interview is online, the participant is all Apple users. The interview included three simple questions.

Q: What aspect did the iOS or macOS system attract you, design? Service?

Q: Do you think Apple is minimalist? Why or why not?

Q: Why did you choose Apple but not the others brand?

The first participants

A: Because the operation is simple, the software is rich and the function is complete

A: Of course

A: Accustomed to using

The second participants

A: Simple, quick transmission between Apple devices is simple.

A: Yes.

A: It's easy for Apple to cross regions, and the App Store is comprehensive.

The third participants

A: Durability and design.

A: Yes

A: Because the whole family uses it

The fourth participant

A: The design is more looks fuller and more comfortable. Of course, the architecture of the shop is also a feature, but it is not a factor in my purchase.

A: Not minimalism

A: Apple can download Google's services directly and easily.

From the comments of interviewers, it can be evident that consumers have a high opinion of Apple

#### 4.3 Further suggestions and strategy [7]

**Table 5.** Strategy formulation

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths and Opportunities (SO)</b></p> <p>Use the mature industrial chain, advanced technology, and brand image to invent your online platform and social media application. Frequently cooperate with popular media platforms, such as TikTok and YouTube to create more streams. Create various videos to arouse emotion and motivation of purchase desire, not only to advertise. Personalized marketing, thinking about using the existing product features to attract more female customers.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses and Opportunities (WO)</b></p> <p>Increase retail stores and promote lower class products in underdeveloped areas, add more affordable devices, focus on the iPhone SE and iPad marketing, and open up the sinking Market.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths and Threats (ST)</b></p> <p>Recognize the tablet market and why the iPad only takes part in a small revenue share. Invest in more high-performance product features to fight with Samsung, Huawei, and Xiaomi.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses and Threats (WT)</b></p> <p>Improve the IOS and macOS systems, and increase the user experience. Solve over-dependence of revenue from iPhone, try to release other types of electronic devices.</p>

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary Finding

In the "Result" part, this paper is separated into three parts to discuss the success of Apple, Social currency, Practical Value, and Emotion. In Social Currency, Apple utilized a short and brief slogan to present its products. One line of simple sentence can illustrate the most dominant feature of the product, which gives the customers a deep impression. Eventually attracted much attention since people could have a topic to talk about. Also, Apple put much emphasis on market segmentation. Apple developed products that met a different group of customers to reach a wider market and eventually obtained a larger market share. In the part of Practical value, hunger marketing was a big strategy used by Apple, making the customers deem that products are valuable and have the potential to appreciate. Meanwhile, advance in technology was also a key to Apple's success. The most solid and core concept for Apple was to make the product better and high quality. Without strong technology and products, all advertisements will eventually be useless. The combination of marketing and product focus can boost a  $1+1 > 2$  effect. Finally, Apple utilized the arrangement and location of the retail stores to evoke customers' emotions.

## 5.2 Research Significance

This paper states the structure of Apple company which provides an excellent example of one firm how to get success. In addition, the factor of products that might influence consumers' consumption is also offered. The article also points out the dependency on smartphones and the behavior of consumers.

## 5.3 Limitations and future study

The data used in the essay are both concluded primary data and secondary data. The primary data we get through the survey shows that the questionnaire only gives the city that income per capita is higher than the rest of China. Besides the interview, the volunteers were selected by random sampling technique, but the quantity was fewer than 50 people.

In the future, the data can be gotten through a questionnaire that covers a larger population area among several cities. The age group should also be considered more specific; the population that purchases different commodities should also be selected as a particular group.

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