

# Marketing Strategy of Nescafé instant coffee

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**Abstract:** This report is about Nescafé instant coffee. As a brief structure introduction, the report first introduced Nescafé, which is a pioneering instant coffee brand with a rich history dating back to 1938, holding a high market share in the global instant coffee market and has a strong brand influence. Aiming at optimizing the marketing strategy and making the company better, the report analysis Nescafé's marketing strategy using 4p, SWOT and so on to maintain Nescafé's leading position in the instant coffee market.

**Keywords:** 4p; SWOT; STP; PR issues; Gen Z; USP; R&D; IARC; IP

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## 1.Introduction

As a famous and time-honored brand of coffee founded by Max Morgenthaler with his team in 1938, Nescafé's parent brand is Nestle, and the name "Nescafé" is a combination of Nestle and cafe. Nestle is a global food and beverage company with a rich history dating back to 1866 when it was founded by Henri Nestle. Over the years, Nestlé has grown to become the 133rd among the Fortune Global 500 (Dr.S. Murugan et al., 2024) . In Nestle's half-year report(January–June2025), "powdered and liquid beverages" (including instant coffee) generated revenue of 12308 million of CHF , it's 27.83% of the group's total revenue, making it the largest contributor (Nestlé S.A., n.d.) . Coffee has always been an irreplaceable category in the beverage sector with broad development prospects, enjoying extremely widespread acceptance worldwide. Faced with such a huge market, countless brands are vying for a share, and the competition in the coffee industry is extremely fierce. As a pioneering and long-established coffee brand, how has Nescafé maintained its reputation and visibility in the fiercely competitive coffee market to this day and built a coffee empire unique to Nestle? This essay will focus on Nescafé's instant coffee products and its marketing strategy, using the company's data, goals, business environment, analysis of competitors and its own strengths and weaknesses, combined with marketing knowledge (4P, SWOT, etc.) to analyze Nescafé's marketing strategy and its impact, and put forward personal improvement suggestions, aiming to help Nescafé's instant coffee optimize its marketing strategy and its own value.

## 2.Product Background

### 2.1 Description

Nestlé is among the earliest and most forward-looking instant coffee brands. Its inspiration originated from its milk powder business — "could we turn the beans into a soluble coffee?" (Nestlé, n.d.). And then, the instant coffee trend it led is unstoppable. In short, Nescafé symbolized modern convenience, American glamour and demographic shifts (Jin, 2023). Nescafé instant coffee is mostly granules in stick packs or sachets, but there are also variants like canned and concentrated coffee liquid.

It has three basic price tiers: the entry-level is the basic low-fat American pure coffee (0.6/cup), a sub-packaged concentrated coffee liquid with extremely high cost performance; the mid-range includes 0-sugar black coffee (1.4/cup) and the 1+2 series latte coffee powder (1.4/cup), both of which are classic flavors with high popularity; and the high-level gold blend series (2.4/cup), which uses low-temperature freeze-drying technology and 0-sugar, 0-fat, and low-calorie healthy high-quality ingredients.

### 2.2 Product Life Cycle

In 1928, Australia was, per capita, the world's leading tea-drinking nation. This began to change after the Second World War, as Nestlé popularized the first product that could challenge Australians' commitment to tea: Nescafé instant coffee (Khamis, 2015) . From 1919 to 1938, as the demand for milk powder from the military

declined after World War I, Nestlé began to focus on researching and developing instant coffee. Since then, Nescafé instant coffee has gone through the introduction stage of its life cycle, followed by a growth stage driven by nutrition and health reforms.

Currently, Nescafé instant coffee is in the maturity stage, with people's enthusiasm and demand for instant coffee still remaining at a relatively high level.

### 2.3 Target Audience

The price of Nescafé instant coffee is generally low. Even the high-level gold blend series is quite affordable compared to coffee shop beverages, which leads to its extremely broad audience.

The first segment is “test preparation sprinter”, referring to student buyers aged 16-26 without income. They have heavy exam tasks and need caffeine to support their intensive late-night review. They require healthy, energizing, portable, and time-efficient cheap instant coffee. This is very common in China, and the order volume surges during exam months.

The second segment is “sleepy office workers”, who are office clerks aged 36-56 with moderately low income. They don't use the Internet frequently and have repetitive workplace lives. They have developed a habit of drinking coffee. Due to time constraints (too rush to go to work, no time for waiting in a coffee shop), price factors, they choose to bring a sachet of instant coffee to their offices.

The third segment is “simple life elder”, they are elder people aged 50-80, have low to moderate education levels, most of them are already retired with relatively low pensions, rarely surf the Internet, but read newspapers, are unfamiliar with or even resistant to new-era technological products, and never or rarely order takeout. They neither use drip coffee bags nor coffee grinders. Due to its simplicity and ease of operation, instant coffee has become part of their breakfast.

The last segment is “curious experimenter”, aged 20-36, well-educated, with moderately high income, and are frequent internet users. They have no habit of drinking instant coffee but are potential buyers. They may try instant coffee out of curiosity about cold-brew freeze-dried coffee technology or novel flavors from collaborations.

## 3. Marketing Mix(4ps)-Product Specific

### 3.1 Product

According to Nestle (2025), Nescafé's mission is “Good food, good life”. Meanwhile, Nescafé instant coffee integrates the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of convenience, cost-effectiveness and high quality. Its packaging design is dominated by brown, gold and red, evoking associations with coffee beans, high quality and a warm, happy life. It is designed into single-serve packaging where one sachet makes one cup, which is convenient for consumers to carry and use. For the parent brand Nestle, the brand logo is a bird feeding the little birds in the nest, it is not only a visualization of the brand name, but also perfectly aligns with Nestlé's early brand story of producing milk powder for infant families. In terms of typographic design, the warm and nurturing bird's nest of the parent company is transformed into Nescafé wrapped in its initials, sustaining the proposition of warmth and happiness. Nescafé forms a unique ecological loop by providing coffee mates, creamers, special coffee cups, etc.

### 3.2 Price

For Nescafé, the strategy of price is based on cost. Nestlé analyses manufacturing, packaging, and delivery costs to set profitable, competitive prices (Anjali, 2023) . From the three price levels of Nescafé instant coffee mentioned earlier, the pricing of instant coffee is generally low. Even the high-end gold blend series (2.4/cup) is far lower than the price of a cup of coffee from a coffee shop. Nescafé penetrates the market with low prices, attracting a large number of buyers and winning with great volume they sold. They also use centralized production and batch bagging, and large packaging to reduce the fixed costs per unit and also indirect cost.

Such low prices attract a large number of consumers but also easily cause problems because if the expected

volume of products sold is not met, the revenue will decline and even the company's cost may be threatened. As the research say: "The world's largest food company, Nestlé, saw a slight decline in revenue last year despite a significant increase in sales. Rising costs have put pressure on profit margins." (Brück M, 2023) . In response, Nescafé has increased the pricing of some limited-edition flavors and high-quality coffees with special raw materials, especially the limited flavors linked with tea, which are priced at 3/cup, the process of all other product lines are also rising slowly, as the growing of technology and digital management, the labor cost of Nescafé can reduce and also save some money.

### **3.3 Place**

Nescafé's distribution includes both online and offline channels. One significant point is that no matter if it is online or offline channels, Nescafé attaches great importance to product exposure. "Our share of research must be higher than our share of market. In a physical store, if you aren't on the shelf, you don't have a chance" (Antonio Sciuto, 2017). Nescafé's marketing approach, which is pervasive in offline convenience stores and online searches, it aims to capture consumers' attention, so that even those who haven't bought coffee before are aware that Nescafé is a brand with high sales, high recognition and is available everywhere. makes people likely to buy a couple of packs or try to drink a cup of Nescafé instant coffee even when they do not need them!

Meanwhile, Nescafé also has a very flexible regional adjustment strategy. Nestlé localizes its products to local cultural preferences and legislation (Anjali, 2023). like in China there are many people love drinking fruit tea, and Nescafé made some instant coffee with the flavor of fruit tee, to ensure they appeal to consumers.

### **3.4 Promotion**

Nescafé often runs promotions where customers can get free samples when purchasing large packs and bundles different coffee flavors to attract potential customers. Online stores adopt a membership system, and members can enjoy new product trial activities, these kinds of activities always in the mode of costing low price and getting 2-3 bags of coffee, even though you buy it, but unfortunately you do not like it, you didn't spend a lot, and most memberships are very interested in these kind of activities, this also keeps them continuously paying attention to the brand and maintaining curiosity.

In terms of advertising, Nescafé uses the classic slogan: "the perfect start to your day" to enhance people's impression of the product and effectively strengthen the brand image, this slogan creates a specific time (morning), scene (having breakfast), and vision (starting a wonderful day), making customers form a mental picture and driving their purchasing intention.

Moreover, Nescafé conducts research on both rational and emotional aspects. Nescafé's advertising posters employ various rhetorical strategies, ethos, which aim to evoke trust and sympathy in the consumer, pathos, which appeal to emotions, and logos, which offer logical arguments, in ways that are intended to shape brand perception and influence the consumer's desire to purchase the product(Yelmen & Aslan, 2025). Nescafé also invites influencers, like in China, Nescafé has invited famous table tennis player Fan Zhendong as the spokesperson for its 0 fat instant coffee. A sport star as a spokesperson related to 0 fat instant coffee with health, strong and enthusiasm and vitality, also aligns with the brand's philosophy while also generating attention and attracting sports enthusiasts to make purchases.

## **4.Core Marketing Strategies**

### **4.1 Positioning**

Nescafé is one of the earliest instant coffee brands. As a pioneer in the industry, its primary competitive advantage lies in being the coffee introduction for countless people. Its numerous loyal buyers and profound brand cultural heritage make it stand out conspicuously among competitors. Of course, the product's high cost-effectiveness is also a crucial factor that supports the longevity of this time-honored brand. According to the

official website of Nescafé, they assert that they are the world's favorite coffee, attributed to their high-quality coffee beans and expert roasting techniques (Nescafé, n.d.). It adopts a Dominant strategy of job-to-be-done matrix. to provide high-quality products for low-income consumers. Finally, each product of Nescafé enhances at least one of the 'big four' micronutrients: iron, iodine, vitamin A and zinc (Nescafé, n.d.). This differentiates from some cheap instant coffees that contain unhealthy ingredients thereby conveying remarkable nutritional value.

Meanwhile, Nescafé also claim that they are a brand concerned about our planet, they plant trees, provide jobs for women and low-income individuals, make donations for human rights and child protection, and support farmers, and till 2024 there are 4.4 million trees planted by the Nestlé Global Reforestation Program in our coffee value chains (Nescafé, n.d.). All these efforts effectively complement the brand's green and sustainable positioning.

#### **4.2 Digital Marketing**

Today, digital marketing is a very significant part of marketing, Nescafé also use digital marketing. Nescafé places advertisements on the homepages of commonly used apps by people, such as Weibo, Tianmao and Taobao. Often, along with the advertisements, there are also discount coupons, official live-streaming rooms, and so on.

In addition, Nescafé also integrates personalized marketing and digital marketing. It can analyze your user data online through AI, such as purchase history, browsing records, and other relevant information, to generate coffee flavors you like and recipes that are suitable for you. You can enter the official website to click “help me choose” to enter the product guide, based experience of coffee, cold/hot preference, and other data you provided to show your coffee profiler results.

And based on the season, weather, and your specific location, it recommends corresponding popular-flavored coffees on the official website page, realizing a seamless integration of digital marketing and geographic information.

To introduce digital technology, Nescafé actively collaborates with digital marketing companies. In 2024, Nescafé collaborated with Lingyang Tiangong Zhitou, leveraging digital outdoor marketing and in-depth big data analysis to gain a profound understanding of and connect closely with Gen Z consumers, while continuously optimizing its digital marketing strategies, such as recreating user profiles and analyzing preferences across online and offline scenarios (Chinapp Editorial Team, 2024).

#### **4.3 Customer Engagement**

In offline stores, Nescafé cooperates with store staff to launch new product tasting activities, which are designed to attract new consumers. Meanwhile, loyal customers who join the brand's membership program will receive birthday wishes and exclusive discount vouchers from Nescafé. While providing emotional value, these discount vouchers also promote product sales. Additionally, brand members will have access to small-packaged new product trial opportunities on online platforms.

Nescafé also combines customer engagement with digital ways. When launching innovative products in China, various departments of Nescafé collaborate with the Tmall Innovation Center (Nestlé, n.d.) to simulate a realistic shopping environment online, enabling consumers to evaluate new products in their own perspectives. This can also help the company to gain a deep understanding of the genuine needs of young consumers and the changes in market trends. On Nescafé's official website, there are some pop-ups asking if you are willing to provide information for market research and user feedback, it also provides a “consumer rating and review service” (Nescafé, n.d.) through which it pays close attention to consumer experiences, promptly improves its shortcomings, and creates a deeper level of interaction and a more intimate consumer experience.

Nescafé has set up pop-up stores in regions such as Guangdong and Jiangsu province in China. On site, customers can receive some special benefits such as complimentary beverages by signing up as members of Nescafé. If they make a purchase at the pop-up stores, they can also get keychains for bags and specialty coffee drinks. Next to the pop-up stores, there are photo booths for taking portrait photos, when consumers spend a certain amount of

money, meeting the special numbers, they can use the photo booths for free to take and print photos. Moreover, if they share the photos on social media, they will receive additional rewards.

#### **4.4 Innovation**

Enterprises must be innovative if they want to develop in the long run, whether it is innovation in product quality or innovation in marketing strategies. According to statistics, Nestlé invest CHF 1.7 billion every year in R&D as an engine for growth (Nestlé S.A., n.d.). In terms of instant coffee, innovations mainly focus on nutrition. For example, a new sugar reduction technology which reduces intrinsic sugar in key ingredients by up to 30% (Nescafé, n.d.), and it is stated in the new report that the 1+2 series underwent a formula upgrade in April 2025, removing hydrogenated vegetable oil (Nescafé, 2024). In the package of the 1+2 instant coffee, it has the words "Newly Upgraded" printed on it.

In addition, Nescafé has newly launched flavors in collaboration with tea (Wang Jing, 2024), for example, Osmanthus Oolong, Jasmine, and Dahongpao tea (foodaily, 2025), this is a rare and bold innovation that combines coffee and tea, and it is quite appealing to customers who usually enjoy drinking tea beverages. It is quite appealing to customers who usually enjoy tea beverages, further expanding the potential audience and also sparking the curiosity of customers who love coffee.

Nescafé also use scarcity marketing. Those instant coffees, which are limited to certain seasons or regions, adopt scarcity marketing, using "limited quantity, limited region, and limited-time launch" to stimulate people's curiosity and purchasing desire (Nestlé Home Enjoy Coffee Limited Edition Returns, 2024).

And the most interesting, dramatic, and innovative marketing method is the large-screen prank, this is a novel method for promoting products, Nescafé places its advertisements on the large screens of shopping malls with extremely high foot traffic. Every advertiser aims to make the large screens play their product ads non-stop without wasting a single second. However, just when people's attention is focused, Nescafé's ad suddenly goes black, making people mistakenly think the advertising screen has malfunctioned. After that, the products from Nescafé's black coffee slowly come into focus at the center of the screen, creating an unexpected effect, which enhances the audience's memory of the product.

#### **5. Competitive analysis**

The main rival product of Nescafé instant coffee is Maxwell House instant coffee, and both Nescafé and Maxwell are well-known old instant coffee brands worldwide. Let's first compare their main advantages. Maxwell House uses Arabica beans, which is a represent of high quality, while Nescafé uses a variety of blends. Maxwell House focuses more on the quality of coffee beans and pure flavor (Maxwell House Coffee: Why Can It Take the Lead Among Numerous Brands?, 2024). Nescafé has advantages in product line diversification and lower price. Those who pursue coffee bean quality and pure taste and flavor are more suitable to choose Maxwell House.

For Nescafé, its high cost performance advantage attracts more price sensitive consumers, and its low price is its first major advantage. Second, the chief technological officer Stefan Palzer said that nutrition is at the origin of Nestlé, and it remains a key strength of our company (Nestlé, n.d.). Nutrition is also one of its core advantages. The third major advantage is Nescafé's brand heritage and full-channel coverage. Nestlé itself is more well-known than Maxwell House. "There are 6 shelves for instant coffee in the supermarket, and Nestlé occupies 4 of them, with a separate discount area." (Zhang Runbang, 2025). Thanks to the brand's emphasis on coverage and product exposure, Nescafé's styles and coverage are more comprehensive in offline stores.

However, at the same time, Nescafé also has some weaknesses, such as the ingredient health issue of the Nescafé 2+1 series. As a cost-effective product, to ensure profits, the 2+1 series use relatively low-cost creamer (only 1/5 or even lower than fresh milk). This is a trade-off that is often criticized because medical professionals point out that long-term consumption of beverages containing creamer may increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and affect digestive system health (Zhang Runbang, 2025).

Another main rival product of Nescafé instant coffee is Xiangpiaopiao, Xiangpiaopiao is a brand in China, it is also a brand trusted by people of any age, especially young generation, because it was founded in a 2005 (You Shangren, 2025), became a childhood memory for many post-2000s generations. Obviously, it is a relatively new brand of instant drinks, they initially focused on promoting instant milk tea and became very popular among students in schools and now, they also offer instant coffee.

Compared with Nescafé, one of the unique features of Xiangpiaopiao is its products come with disposable cups, one disposable cup contain a bag of instant coffee, one straw, and coffee companions like creamer, all you need is hot water, and then you can take a cup of coffee in hand and go, while Nescafé requires you to use your own cup. However, this "one disposable cup per use" model is less environmentally friendly and also generates a lot of waste (*Revealing! The "Sweet Trap" Behind Xiangpiaopiao—A Full Exposure of the Five Factories' Truths!*, 2025), we can understand that Nescafé do not use disposable cups to make their products more convenient because they stick to producing products that are more eco-friendly. At the same time, Nescafé still has the advantage of high cost-effectiveness, as one cup of Xiangpiaopiao costs about 3 to 5 yuan, which is much more expensive than you drink a cup of Nescafé.

All the way, Nescafé is also facing competition from drip bag coffee and coffee machine. These kinds of coffee making modes allow consumers to process coffee themselves and enable them to get close to the raw materials and participate in every step of coffee making. It is suitable for people who pursue a sense of ritual and those who have free time and love life. In the minds of many people, this way of drinking coffee is authentic and noble, a kind of ritual, enjoyment, and even becoming a special hobby. Moreover, coffee made in this way can better retain the original flavor of coffee beans, and there is also a lot of space for customers to operate, add flavors they like, and blend it by themselves.

As a comparison, Nescafé instant coffee has a advantage of convenience. You don't have to wait for coffee to drip from a funnel, wait for the coffee machine to work, nor prepare so many tools. Another advantage is that whether it's high-quality coffee beans, drip bag coffee, or a coffee machine, they all cost more than Nestlé instant coffee. Additionally, the entry barrier is higher—they generally require time-consuming operation and learning, making them unfriendly to students in a hurry, office workers, and elderly people with low learning ability.

## 6.Challenges & Recommendations

### 6.1 Challenges

Nescafé is also facing many challenges. According to the report, China's coffee consumption market size is about 100 billion yuan, and instant coffee accounts for 72% of the market share (Zhongyan Puhua, 2025). Among them, the room temperature instant coffee market is relatively mature, consumer demand tends to be saturated, and the growth rate will gradually slow down (Zhongyan Puhua, 2025). However, one thing that need to pay attention is although the technical boulder is relatively low, the instant coffee market is highly concentrated, with the top five companies occupying more than 70% of the market share (Qiyeku, 2025), among these companies, Nescafé with strong brand influence and channel advantages, with a market share of more than 30%, accounting for about 25% of the unified share (Qiyeku, 2025).

Although it seems like Nescafé has already ruled an obvious part of this area, challenges always existing. As I mentioned before, coffee has always been an irreplaceable category in the beverage sector with broad development prospects. There are always new entrants wanting to get a piece of pie, and customers will face more diversified choices, they are easily attracted by new things they have never seen before, for some people who pursue uniqueness and niche products, Nescafé may be regarded as popular but boring, and even its high cost-effectiveness may be considered low-grade. Nescafé should continue to innovate, expand sales channels, and optimize its products and marketing strategies.

Copycat products are also an issue that deserves attention (*Full Analysis of Authenticity Identification for Nestlé*

*Canned Coffee*, 2025). There was a case of counterfeit Nescafé sold online in Wuxi (Jiangnan Evening News, 2018). Copycat products can lead to negative impacts such as damage to brand reputation. It is recommended to add exclusive anti-counterfeiting marks and, at the same time, raise consumers' vigilance in promotions.

Nescafé has some public relations issues, and potential health concerns are still being discussed. Till now, there are still some people say that Nescafé contains a compound called acrylamide, a known potential carcinogen that forms when coffee beans are roasted at high temperatures that Cancer (IARC) has classified acrylamide as “possibly carcinogenic to humans.”(Francis Olson, 2024), even though Nescafé has responded to this issue before, they clarified that according to the Food Standards Agency, the levels of acrylamide contained in Nescafé Gold Blend pose no risk to the human health (Times of Malta, 2012).

## **6.2 Future Strategies**

In the view of shopping guides, price is the most sensitive factor for people buying instant coffee (Zhang Runbang, 2025). Nescafé needs to stick to marketing penetration in Ansoff's options, continuously develop cheaper and better products, retain loyal old customers, and strengthen youth-oriented marketing to continue penetrating the market. Competitor Maxwell House has collaborated with Minions IP to attract trendy young consumers. Additionally, MODONG MAGIC instant coffee uses dopamine color packaging to give the product a visual sense of fashion. However, Nescafé, which already has tight costs and limited room for change, does not seem enthusiastic about changing its traditional color packaging. This may be a way to maintain its classic image, but more exciting packaging designs can bring a fresh look and attract Gen Z consumers, enabling low-cost and rapid expansion into new demographics.

In the next few years, Nescafé can continue to support farmers, helping smaller holder coffee growers transform their farms into resilient businesses (Nescafé, 2024). While achieving self-production and self-marketing, it can fulfill its corporate social responsibility and gradually realize the "2030 plan". In addition, Nescafé can continue growing trees, act their responsibilities of “aiming to plant 20 million native trees in and around coffee farms by 2026” (Nescafé, n.d.).

Nescafé can also launch an online mini-program, using geographic data and AI to generate coffee recipe recommendations and push them to the homepage of the mini-program. At the same time, it can provide an integrated service process of one-click ordering and dedicated delivery to home. It can also create offline instant coffee experience stores, allowing consumers to watch the transparent and green production process and allocate their favorite instant coffee flavors on the spot according to their preferences.

## **7. Conclusion**

To conclude, Nescafé's marketing success has five key points: extensive channel coverage: it emphasizes brand exposure, with obvious advantages in online search share and offline shelf share. Second, profound brand cultural heritage: as a pioneering old brand in the instant coffee industry, it has a long-standing and convincing brand accumulation, as well as a large number of loyal buyers and base audiences and is also the preferred choice for potential instant coffee customers. Third, high-cost-effective marketing: it uses a dominant strategy to attract price-sensitive customers, many students, and office workers. Fourth, digital marketing and customer engagement: it retains old customers through online feedback, AI personalized recommendations, birthday gifts for members, etc., resulting in strong customer stickiness. Fifth, appropriate added value: such as environmental protection, recycling, nutritious products, and a happy life. Key takeaways: as a classic brand, Nescafé needs to balance the inheritance of classics and innovation.

While consolidating its own advantages, it should also flexibly adapt to the development of the times, frequently and proactively review its own problems, actively optimize, and progress together with the times. The brand should be guided by customers' real needs, make products truly valuable so that customers are willing to pay for them, and build a competitive barrier with other brands to improve customer loyalty, making old consumers

willing to repurchase and forming a positive cycle.

The brand also needs to pay attention to corporate social responsibility, enhancing its brand image and long-term value through actions such as agricultural assistance and recycling. Today, Nescafé is on the mature stage. "Every second every day, the world enjoys another 5500 cups of Nescafé." (Nescafé, n.d.). Through these plans, it is hoped that Nescafé can maintain its leading position, continuing to delight customers worldwide, cup after cup, year after year.

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