

# The analysis of Nintendo's marketing strategy

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**Abstract:** *Nintendo, which has built a loyal following with its console products since its inception, has become a leader in interactive games as it competes with its peers with innovative technology and a line of popular animated characters. During the global epidemic in recent years, due to the restrictions on people's travel, game console products once again entered people's vision, and its business has achieved unprecedented development during this period. This report will analyze the competitive strengths and weaknesses of Nintendo Switch, the company's most popular product today, and the industry environment it faces. By analyzing its existing target consumers and its competitive position in the industry, suggestions are put forward to improve the product features of Nintendo Switch in order to position the product more accurately and increase its attraction to the target group.*

**Keywords:** *Distribution channels, e-commerce platforms, new entrants, technological substitution, electronic entertainment industry, hardcore gamers*

## 1. Introduction

Nintendo Corporation was founded more than 130 years ago as a pioneer manufacturer of video games and toys in Kyoto, Japan, specializing in the development, production and sale of hardware and software for home entertainment products. Today, the company has occupied an irreplaceable position in the national market of interactive entertainment (Nintendo, 2021)<sup>[22]</sup>. It operates through the following divisions: Japan, Americas, Europe and Others. All of these regional divisions sell one business category, electronic entertainment products (Nintendo, 2021)<sup>[22]</sup>. These include the Game Boy handheld gaming system, new consoles such as the Nintendo DS and the Nintendo Wii, as well as other consoles with motion-sensing (BBC, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. Innovative and diverse products continue to inject new vitality into the market, enabling the company to continue to expand its influence and market share (BBC, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. According to Guinness World Records, Nintendo holds four of the top ten best-selling consoles, only following to SONY's PlayStation (BBC, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. In the second half of the 20th century, the change and development of science and technology almost affected all walks of life. The improvement of the commercialization speed of new inventions led to the shortening of product life cycle, and products were eliminated faster than before, such as the electronics industry in Japan (Hooley et al., 2020)<sup>[15]</sup>. Nintendo was chosen for the study because demand for the Company's Nintendo Switch was at its peak during a period of political and economic changes due to the COVID-19 outbreak, when many governments banned citizens from leaving their homes (Alumni, 2020)<sup>[1]</sup>. However, due to Nintendo's lack of supply, the product has been largely out of stock in the global market for a long time (Alumni, 2020)<sup>[1]</sup>. Nintendo Switch is both a home game console and portable. In addition to playing the game on a handheld device, players can connect it to a TV dock and play from a distance of several feet. Players can even remove the side strap of the Nintendo Switch and use mobile signals to complete the actions of characters in the game. This feature not only immerses the player in the game world but also helps them exercise (Lopez, 2019)<sup>[18]</sup>.

## 2. Competitive position and industry competitiveness

### 2.1. Swot

#### (1) Nintendo's strengths

SONY and Microsoft have launched products such as the Xbox and Play Station, The price range is from \$349 \$499 to \$299 for the Switch's starter pack, and this pricing difference has played a huge role in shifting the customer base to Nintendo and away from the competition (Business Strategy Hub, 2020)<sup>[9]</sup>. Gameplay on the Nintendo Switch is more diverse and practical than competing products, allowing players to enjoy a wide variety of Nintendo games in their hands while also exercising on the

Switch based on their skill level (Kain, 2020)<sup>[17]</sup>. When it comes to promotions, Nintendo also uses social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to widely promote its brand's product stories and campaigns to launch new products. For Nintendo, every new product launch is a huge promotion. With 6.5 million fans on Facebook and tens of thousands of views per tweet, Nintendo Switch has a high level of engagement on the social platform (Pratap, 2019)<sup>[24]</sup>. In addition to carrying out marketing activities online, Nintendo also has strong distribution channels in major regions of the world. Its European headquarters is set up in Frankfurt, Germany, the American headquarters is set up in Washington, DC, and the Australian subsidiary headquarters is located in Melbourne, which is responsible for the entire Oceania business (Bhasin, 2019)<sup>[6]</sup>. The Nintendo Switch can be purchased at large box stores, appliance retail outlets, game counters like game stores, and online outlets like Amazon.com, eBay, and more (Bhasin, 2019)<sup>[6]</sup>.

Table 1: Nintendo SWOT analysis table

<b>Strengths:</b> 1. Excellent product performance: The game itself is both entertaining and useful 2. Play with variety 3. Extensive and diverse distribution channels 4. Competitive pricing 5. Effective marketing campaigns	<b>Opportunities:</b> 1. The rise of e-commerce and social media reduces publicity and marketing costs 2. Gyms have been closed due to the epidemic 3. The epidemic has prompted the government to enact home quarantine policies 4. Consumer demand for entertainment products increases: Home isolation gives people more time for entertainment 5. Growing health awareness
<b>Weaknesses:</b> 1. Inventory cannot meet market demand 2. Slow to respond to demand 3. Games rely too much on accessories	<b>Treats:</b> 1. Fierce competitive environment 2. The decline in average income of the target group and the lack of fitness preferences among adults with shrinking incomes 3. Increased piracy 4. Stronger alternatives 5. Demographic change

### (2) Nintendo's weaknesses

The most significant weakness Nintendo Switch has shown is its slow response to market demand, with billions of people staying at home and socially distancing themselves in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, boredom at home led to a surge in demand for video games, but Nintendo wasn't quick enough to respond, leading to severe shortages in markets around the world (Kain, 2020)<sup>[17]</sup>. Even the majority of Nintendo games can be purchased as a hard copy or digital download with no time or space constraints. But the lack of Nintendo Switch consoles has prevented consumers from playing games, and the lack of availability has been the subject of news reports and social media conversations, which has significantly impacted the company's earnings over the life of the product (Williams, 2020)<sup>[28]</sup>.

### (3) Nintendo's opportunities

The growth of social media has helped Nintendo dramatically reduce the cost of entering new markets and gain users by slashing its marketing budget. The e-commerce business model also helps Nintendo establish connections with manufacturers, suppliers and logistics companies in the international market, greatly reducing communication costs and bargaining power of suppliers. At the same time, e-commerce platforms can even carry out accurate marketing for customers with potential purchase intention based on historical data and purchase behavior (Farhoomand & Joshi, 2018)<sup>[12]</sup>. Globalization, digital marketing and the prosperity of social media greatly reduce the risk of entering the international market and marketing (Farhoomand & Joshi, 2018)<sup>[12]</sup>. In addition, due to the impact of COVID-19, a large number of public places were forced to stay at home and could not go to the gym for exercise. The Nintendo Switch handheld device can be used for exercise in private at home, which greatly meets the needs of those who want to exercise at home (Phelan, 2020)<sup>[23]</sup>. Traditional video games encourage sedentary lifestyles and are thought to contribute to diseases such as obesity. Younger millennial parents are more health-conscious and sporty, and this awareness will encourage more parents to buy Nintendo Switches for their children to engage in physical activity (Tawagi, 2018)<sup>[26]</sup>.

#### (4) The Threat of Nintendo

It is not hard to find that the products of existing competitors SONY and Microsoft occupy a significant market share in the electronic game industry. With the capital input of a series of commercial giants such as Google, Amazon and LG Electronics, the competitive environment in the electronic game industry is becoming increasingly fierce (BBC, 2020)<sup>[5]</sup>. On the other hand, with the continuous shortage of Nintendo Switch, various pirated devices frequently appear on e-commerce platforms. These counterfeits are not supervised by the official authorities and lead to uneven quality levels. It is easy to cause consumers to attribute poor game experience to Nintendo or the game itself, thus damaging the game's reputation and leading to customer loss. In addition, the population of Nintendo's target market is declining in some European countries, where the community is aging and the declining youth population will also affect the long-term profitability of the game (Bloom et al., 2015)<sup>[7]</sup>.

#### 2.2. Porter's five forces

Table 2: Porter's Five Forces analysis table for Nintendo

Degree of rivalry: high
1. Taking almost the entire market share together with the main competitor
2. The exit barrier is large
3. Low degree of product differentiation
Threats of new entrance: medium
1. High entry costs, but new methods can be used to replace the functions of existing products
2. Small product differences
3. There is a gap in the market
Threat of substitutes: high
1. Eliminate the original technology
2. Continuous product improvement
Bargaining power of supplier: high
1. The cost of switching suppliers is high
2. Suppliers provide highly differentiated products
Bargaining power of buyer: low
1. Sellers are more concentrated than buyers
2. Buyers find it difficult to obtain similar supplies from other sources

##### (1) Degree of rivalry: high

In any business, competition comes primarily from existing competitors, and in video games industry, Nintendo, SONY and Microsoft have carved up almost the entire market share. SONY's PlayStation 4 (PS4) is the industry leader with a 57 percent market share. In contrast, Microsoft's Xbox One accounts for only a quarter of the market share, while Nintendo's Switch accounts for only 16% (Bhasin, 2019)<sup>[6]</sup>. SONY's PS4 was the world's best-selling video game console in 2019, with nearly 18.3 million units sold worldwide. That is almost three times the sales of its direct rival Microsoft's Xbox One, and nearly 2m more than Nintendo's latest console, the Nintendo Switch, turning the duel in the industry into a three-way battle (Statista, 2021)<sup>[25]</sup>. SONY launched the PlayStation line, while Microsoft made the Xbox. All three companies invest a large amount of money in new products (Baack et al., 2012)<sup>[3]</sup>, which leads to high barriers to exit the industry. Once enterprises find it difficult to exit the market they have entered, they are likely to redouble their efforts to compete for success, and high sunk costs will delay their exit (Hooley et al., 2020)<sup>[15]</sup>.

##### (2) Threats of new entrance: low

In addition to existing competitors, companies also need to consider the threat of potential entrants. Although games are expensive to develop, they are not a big concern for the capital giants. In March, for example, Google is the first company to announce its entry into the gaming media space with its Stadia service, which will leverage the company's network of data centers to enable gamers to play their favorite games on almost any device (Marx, 2019)<sup>[20]</sup>. Apple later announced the game's iOS Apple Store bundle, the Apple iPhone can be used as a portable game console, and the iPad is also likely to enter the gaming market (Baack et al., 2012)<sup>[3]</sup>. Amazon, on the other hand, has enough power to enter the gaming market with its Web services. It already owns Twitch, a gaming media site where viewers can watch and interact with players, and it's only a matter of time before the e-commerce giant enters the gaming space (Marx, 2019)<sup>[20]</sup>. In addition, there is a gap in the market, where existing

companies cannot adequately meet customer needs and desires, there are more opportunities for new entrants to provide products and services to unmet or neglected sub-markets (Hooley et al., 2020)<sup>[15]</sup>. Mobile devices, for example, cater to consumers who can't afford a console but want to play games. A first-quarter survey of U.S. broadband households found that 56 percent of people play games on tablets or smartphones, followed by PC (51 percent), consoles (28 percent) and other platforms (20 percent) (John & Mello, 2020)<sup>[16]</sup>.

### **(3) Threat of substitutes: high**

New entrants can use existing technologies or make revolutionary changes in the market with leapfrog technologies. Technological substitution may be generated by new entrants or original enterprises using new methods, and substitutes can often improve the competitiveness of an industry (Bloom et al., 2015)<sup>[7]</sup>. Thus, in addition to the aforementioned new entrants becoming substitutes for existing technologies by introducing new ways of playing, the industry's original brands, such as SONY, Microsoft and Nintendo, are also becoming substitutes for each other's products. More than 700 million people now play video games on dedicated consoles, and the console industry is expected to generate \$45 billion in revenue this year, according to market research firm Newzoo. To grab a bigger slice of the \$160bn gaming market, Microsoft, SONY and Nintendo are all investing to constantly improve their products and trying to force more changes in the industry in the future (Browne, 2020)<sup>[8]</sup>.

### **(4) Bargaining power of supplier: high**

In the video game industry, all high-quality products rely on powerful technological components. The nano-chip, wireless chip, small integrated circuit, micro-controller and other components provided by suppliers are the exclusive scientific and technological achievements of each supplier (Duprey, 2020)<sup>[11]</sup>. These highly differentiated components provide suppliers with stronger bargaining power in terms of tangible differences such as product standards, attributes and design, as well as intangible differences such as brand or reputation, which leads to the buyer's difficulty in obtaining substitutes elsewhere or higher purchase costs (Hooley et al., 2020)<sup>[15]</sup>.

### **(5) Bargaining power of buyer: medium**

In various brands of electronic entertainment industry, the products have their own unique technological threshold and selling point, these products are usually difficult to be copied in a short time and replacement, and the existing game brands on the market is not much and at the beginning of the issue is more in demand, so interested in the products of game players are usually very willing to pay high prices for them.

Conclusion: To sum up, the competition in the video game industry is very fierce. For many years, no company can guarantee that its products can become the most popular game machine forever. Every competitor has its own strong brand identity and core selling points. Microsoft and SONY, for example, have focused primarily on creating state-of-the-art consoles, while Nintendo has tried to appeal to a wider audience (Browne, 2020)<sup>[8]</sup>. Now, other tech giants are also trying to tap into the \$160 billion gaming market, with Google, Amazon and Facebook launching their own cloud-based gaming services. (Browne, 2020)<sup>[8]</sup>.

## **3. Segmentation & Product positioning**

### **3.1. Segmentation**

Yee (2006)<sup>[29]</sup> explained Bartle's theoretical framework and identified three different motivations for playing video games: fulfillment, social need, and immersion. Gamers fall into four categories, and those who see games as a "means to an end" fall into two categories: casual gamers and social gamers. Casual gamers use games as a means to achieve other goals, such as getting out of the monotony of work, passing the time, or simply entertaining themselves, and often don't care if the equipment is professional enough (Maher et al., 2018)<sup>[19]</sup>. Thus, the importance of a game depends on the extent to which it serves other purposes. Playing in the company of others is a defining characteristic of social gamers, and social gamers view video games as a means to achieve social interactions, such as connecting with friends and spending quality time together, more important than winning games (Maher et al., 2018)<sup>[19]</sup>. Bonding with friends and spending quality time, for example, are more important than winning games, their purchases are often influenced by their peers, and they spend more money on games than casual gamers. In addition, there are gamers who play games for their own purposes, which can be further divided into hardcore gamers and professional gamers. For hardcore

gamers, they spend a lot of time playing video games. Their motivation is to keep improving and improving their game skills (Maier et al., 2018)<sup>[19]</sup>. Generally, they don't mind spending money on gaming equipment or games they are interested in, but they are usually very focused on the type of game they are interested in, so they spend less on games than professional gamers. Professional gamers, on the other hand, are similar to hardcore gamers and spend a lot of time practicing and improving their skills. What's more, professional gamers think of games as similar to professional sports and compete against other avid gamers in professional tournaments (Maier et al., 2018)<sup>[19]</sup>. Thus, in addition to honing their gaming skills, winning games is also an important motivator for professional gamers (Maier et al., 2018)<sup>[19]</sup>. To sum up, consumers' attitude and dependence on games affect their requirements for gaming equipment and the amount of money they are willing to invest in games. Therefore, these two points can be used as consumer characteristics to segment consumers. According to the survey, 33.7 percent of respondents identified themselves as casual gamers. 31.7% identified themselves as hardcore gamers and 26.7% as social gamers. Only 7.9% of participants identified themselves as professional gamers (Maier et al., 2018)<sup>[19]</sup>. Nintendo Switch is aimed at players who want to be entertained, not to compete, or to gain a deeper level of mastery in the game, and are not willing to spend a lot of money on the game. Therefore, it can be found that the largest proportion of casual players who fit Nintendo Switch's product positioning are the core target group of Nintendo and attract Nintendo the most. Professional gamers who are highly specialized and willing to spend a lot of money don't fit into Nintendo Switch's focus on simple gameplay, and are a dead end business for Nintendo Switch. Social gamers are a marginal business market that doesn't have a particularly high demand for games, but because Nintendo Switch can meet their social needs, companies are in a strong competitive position in this market, but it doesn't deliver the long-term benefits they need. Although the huge market share of hardcore gamers leads to a high market attraction, Nintendo Switch's competitive position in this market is not high. According to the global sales of video game consoles in the past decade, SONY's game consoles occupy the first place with an overwhelming advantage (Statista, 2021)<sup>[25]</sup>. Therefore, the hardcore gamer market is an illusion business for Nintendo Switch. The four categories of gamer types is shown in Figure 1.

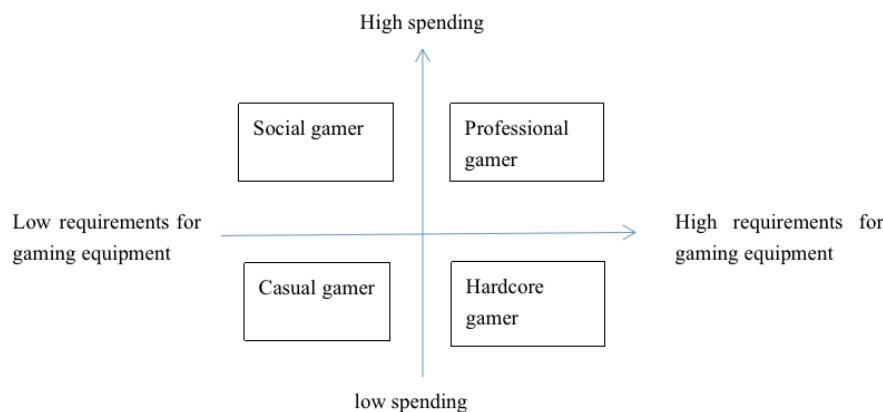


Figure 1: Four categories of gamer types

### 3.2. Perceptual map

The technical level of a product will directly affect its manufacturing process and technical content of the product, thus corresponding to the customer market with different product performance requirements, and the different price of the product also distinguishes the customer groups with different purchase intention intensity. Therefore, the two attributes of game system configuration and price are suitable for differentiating different brands of console products. The game industry has shifted from arcade games to home consoles. Some of the most successful companies in the history of the industry include Atari and Microsoft in the United States, and Nintendo, Sega and SONY in Japan (Henderson, 2021)<sup>[13]</sup>. Atari and Sega both ended their console hardware businesses after a series of failures in the console market. Since then, Nintendo has dominated the console market for nearly a decade. After Japan's SONY entered the console market in 1994 with its Playstation console and stole a lot of market competition, Microsoft spent hundreds of millions of dollars developing the Xbox (Henderson, 2021)<sup>[13]</sup>. After decades of development, these three top companies now dominate the video game console market (Consalvo, 2006)<sup>[10]</sup>. Nintendo Switch uses a different positioning strategy than Microsoft's Xbox and SONY's playstation series. Nintendo games are more like family games,

allowing parents and children to have interactive and fun times through simpler and more accessible controls, just for fun and entertainment rather than competition (Bhasin, 2019)<sup>[6]</sup>. Xbox One and PS4 were built for hardcore gamers or people who were very demanding when it came to gaming, and they were more demanding (Bhasin, 2019)<sup>[6]</sup>. In terms of price, the new Nintendo Switch system retails for \$299, not including games. Once accessories are taken into account, prices rise rapidly. The Xbox One and PS4 are worth a lot more in comparison (Andronico, 2017)<sup>[2]</sup>. Both systems cost less than \$299 and are usually bundled with at least one game (Andronico, 2017)<sup>[2]</sup>. On the screen side, the PS4 Pro and Xbox One are capable of scaling resolution up to 4K at 60 frames per second. All Xbox and PlayStation consoles also support high dynamic range (HDR) graphics, and the Switch's screen doesn't really compare to the graphics capabilities of those consoles, while the Xbox has the cheapest 4K Blu-ray player on the market (Henderson, 2021)<sup>[13]</sup>. On the other hand, both Xbox One and PS4 have opted for a powerful AMD Radeon graphics card and 8GB of RAM (the Switch reportedly has 4GB), and both systems have 500GB of storage that can be expanded with an external hard drive (Henderson, 2021)<sup>[13]</sup>. As a result, the Xbox One and PS4 have a performance advantage over the Nintendo Switch. In terms of CPU, both systems use the Jaguar eight-core chip, although they are custom made (Terrano, 2021)<sup>[27]</sup>. The PS4 clocked in at 1.6Ghz compared to Microsoft's flagship clocked at 1.75Ghz. Both machines should be able to handle most games and applications quickly for gamers (Terrano, 2021)<sup>[27]</sup>. For the GPU used, the PS4's peak throughput was 1.84 TFLOP, better than the Xbox One's 1.23 TFLOP. The takeaway from this information is that the PS4 offers slightly more features in the performance department, which could mean smoother or better looking games. The last point to mention in this comparison is that the PS4's hard drive can be removed and upgraded by the user, while the Xbox One is non-removable (Terrano, 2021)<sup>[27]</sup>. Therefore, the PS4 is a bit better than the Xbox One in terms of systems, but the latter is a bit cheaper. On top of that, the next big thing in the console world is steam Deck, developed by PC gaming giant Valve, which is set to launch in December 2021. The tripartite console is expected to be well ahead of the Nintendo Switch, but it won't be anywhere near the ps4 and Xbox. Because Steam Deck's raw graphics capabilities are less than half of Microsoft's entry-level Xbox Series S. But it only needs to support 720p games, not 1440p or even 1080p, and consumers can expect to buy it for \$400 (Hollister, 2021)<sup>[14]</sup>. The perceptual map for Nintendo switch pro is shown in Figure 2.

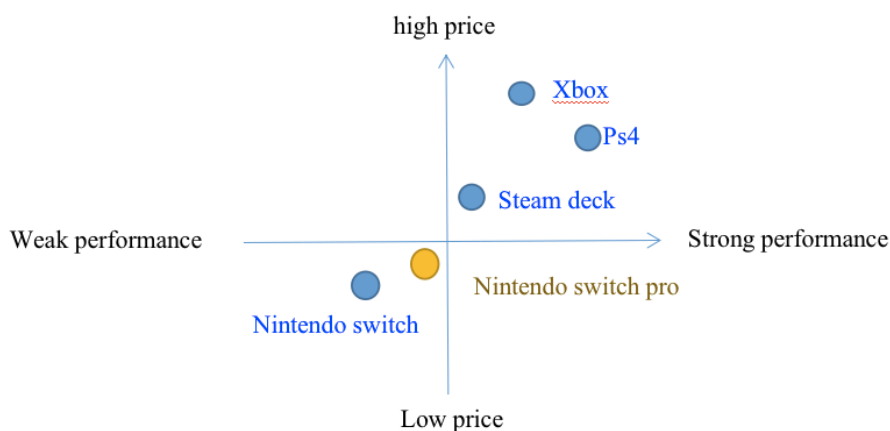


Figure 2: The perceptual map for Nintendo switch pro

### 3.3. Positioning

Nintendo Switch is aimed at gamers who are interested in games but only play them casually in their spare time. This group can include women, the elderly, families, children, students, soldiers and other diverse groups (Bhasin, 2019)<sup>[6]</sup>. If Nintendo Switch can basic little change in price under the condition of matching more professional fitness game, at the same time set up near the player area real-time ranking list, allowing players to choose other players in the rankings online game, players can through the simulation game role in real life and make all kinds of action to achieve the effect of exercise, that will stimulate the interest of more college students and urban white-collar workers between the ages of 20 and 35. These groups are generally busy with their studies and work, sedentary for a long time and lack of exercise. Even on rest days, many people will be reluctant to go out for fitness because of the bad weather or the distance to the gym and other reasons, More fitness games mean gamers can choose games tailored to their fitness needs, such as fat loss and muscle gain, and

exercise in privacy with their console and TV on at home. In addition, they can exercise in private by simply turning on the console and TV at home, and the competitions with nearby players can also motivate players to keep playing, while forming a Nintendo gamer community and increasing engagement with the game. The slogan for this new Nintendo Switch (Nintendo Switch Pro) is: Let's get moving! The slogan goes against the conventional wisdom that gamers need to be sedentary for long periods of time, emphasizing that the new Nintendo Switch Pro will keep players healthy as well as happy, and it is also a call to action for consumers to buy the Nintendo Switch Pro.

#### 4. Conclusion

Research data show that the game console market will still grow at a rate of 20% in the next five years, and SONY and Microsoft will occupy the majority of the market share of the industry for a long time with their continuous technological innovation capabilities (Mordor Intelligence, 2021)<sup>[21]</sup>. Although Nintendo's target audience is not hardcore gamers like SONY and Microsoft, in such a competitive environment, Nintendo still needs to increase its R&D investment to meet the changing needs of its target customers and achieve sustainable development.

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